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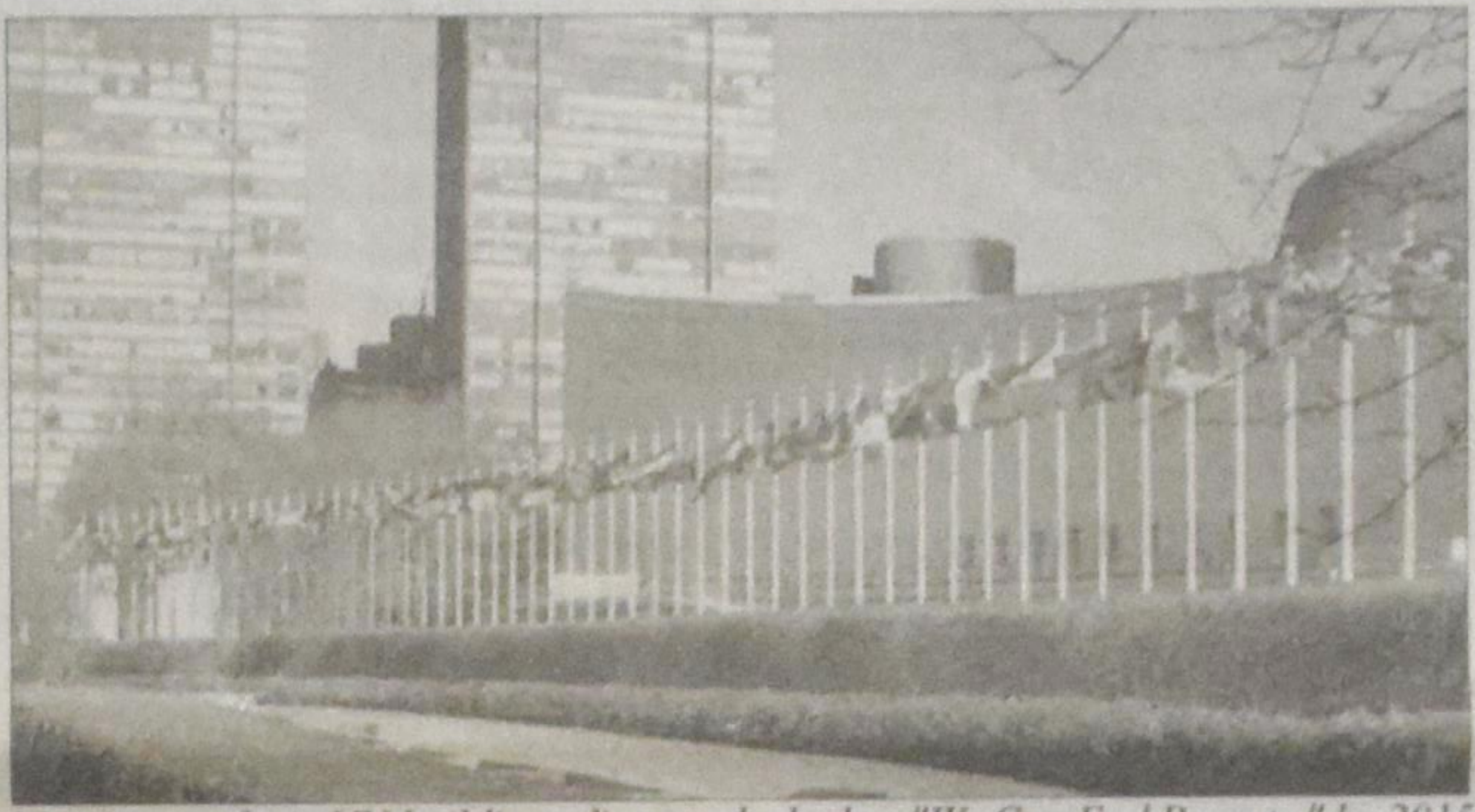
Five years left, and the UN's MDGs remain as remote as ever

Hendrik Vlaar

NEW YORK, N.Y. – From September 20-22, the United Nations (UN) held an Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Summit in New York city led by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, welcoming leaders from all over the world in government, the private sector and aid organizations. The meeting marks ten years since the original UN Millennium Summit, when over 150 heads of state discussed the organization's role as it moved into the 21st century. It was that Summit which was responsible for establishing the Millennium Development Goals for the improvement of social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. In the same city ten years later, world leaders gathered again to review how much progress has, or has not, been made over the last decade.

Such a review is incredibly complex, as it involves billions of people, thousands of markets, and hundreds of nations. In the midst of all the data, however, it does not take long to notice that while progress was made throughout the beginning and middle of this decade, the economic crisis of the past two years has stymied much of that progress, forcing some areas of development into even regression.

In the recently published UN fact-sheet "Where are the gaps?" nine areas of Millennium Development shortfall are identified, along with corresponding suggestions towards MDG fulfillment. Disturbingly, the first four of these identified gaps revolve around funding shortages. The gap between funds agreed upon by developed nations for Official Development Assistance (0.7 percent of gross national income) and actual funds committed is over $150 billion. Although there is controversy regarding the 0.7, the G8 promised a $50 billion increase towards Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending at the Gleneagles Summit in 2005. The gap between those renewed 2005 funding promises and funds committed by 2009 is over $25 billion. In short, when it comes to ODA funding by developed nations, promises made are rarely kept.



Meetings at these UN buildings discussed whether "We Can End Poverty." by 2015.

'Disappointed' by the discrepancy

Other gaps remain, particularly in the still-unconcluded Doha Round talks, which aim to create an "open, equitable, rule-based, predicable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system." Negotiations, says the report, are at an impasse, after the talks collapsed in 2008 when developed and developing nations failed to reach agreements on agricultural import rules at the height of the international food

See **MDGs** *on page 2*

MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight goals derived from the United Nations Millennium Declaration for the improvement of social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries, time-bound to be reached by 2015. The goals are as follows:

1) End Poverty and Hunger
2) Universal Education
3) Gender Equality
4) Child Health
5) Maternal Health
6) Combat HIV/AIDS
7) Environmental Sustainability
8) Global Partnership.

Report threatens to undermine Rwanda's 'divine' dictator

Emily Wierenga

KIGALI, Rwanda – Sixteen years ago, Rwanda – riddled by the aftermaths of genocide – was void of infrastructure, justice system, schools or healthcare. Today, it is ranked one of Africa's safest and most successful countries, boasting a booming economy, universal primary education, health insurance, fast-expanding tourism as well as an agriculture sector. And the man behind it all, President Paul Kagame, was re-elected for the third time this summer with no real challengers.

On October 1, the UN published a report detailing massacres committed by Rwandan troops under Kagame's control in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the genocide. President Kagame has denied the accusations, which threaten to undermine his legitimacy as the leader who ended the killings in 1994. Internationally, the diplomatic crisis eclipses the president's 93 percent landslide, or tsunami, as some have called it.

The Economist calls Kagame a "flawed hero."

But for many Rwandans, such as Isidore Bimenyimana – a Kigali schoolteacher who was 16 during the genocide – Kagame remains an un-debated hero.

"Most leaders in Africa are not like our president," Bimenyimana told *GlobalPost*. "Our president is confident. He encourages people to work hard. When he promises to do something, he does it. Rwanda has been renewed, and most people from Africa want to come see what we are achieving because of this man. I can even say I love him."

Bimenyimana recalls days when Rwanda's infrastructure was shattered; when bodies layered the streets, decomposing; when 300,000 children were orphaned, forced into exile. He recalls how the country

See **Kagame** *on page 2*

News

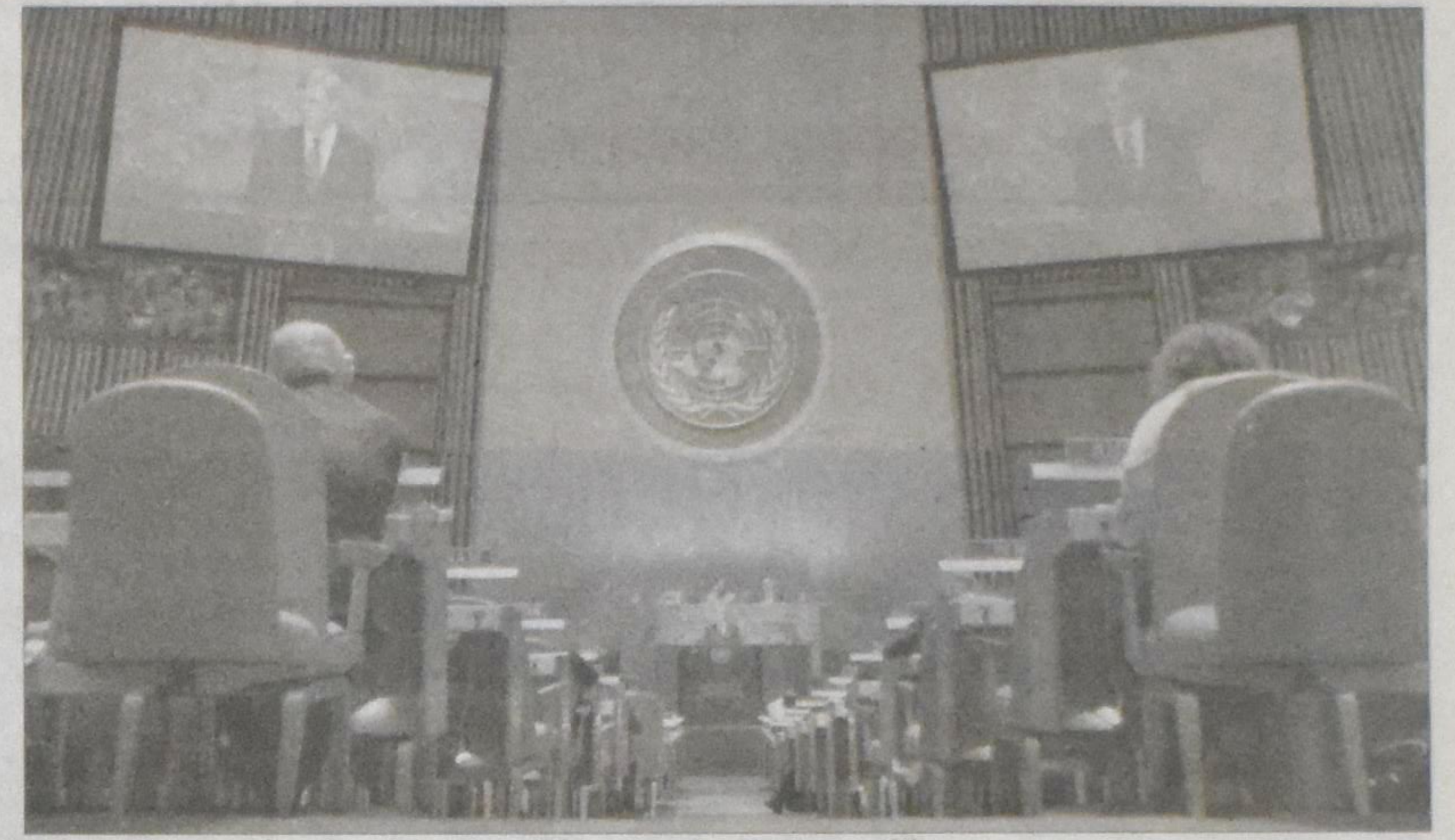
MDG's *continued*

pricing crisis. Further gaps are found in debt sustainability, access to essential medicines, and access to new technologies.

"The gap," Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in his UN assembly address, "between aspiration and achievement [is] so disappointing."

One can't help but wonder whether Mr. Harper has the right to be disappointed at anyone but himself. Regarding the seventh MDG, environmental sustainability, Harper and his delegates were none short of deceptive and obstructive at the 2009 Copenhagen conference on climate change. Following this, the press was littered with articles about Canada's lost place of leadership in the world. Now that same leader, while speaking words of noble cause, is, again, refusing to make real commitments – by failing to increase Canadian funding so desperately needed by the poorest of the poor.

Dennis Howlett, the national coordinator for Make Poverty History Canada, reported that "French President Sarcozy announced a 20 percent increase in France's contribution to the Global Fund," and that a draft of Harper's UN address indicated he would also announce a 20 percent increase. However, such details were missing from Harper's final address, making it nothing more than a part of his campaign to be elected onto the UN Security Council. While Canadian achievements such as the Muskoka initiative to secure maternal, newborn and child health are commendable, they are useless without robust financial commitment. With the Canadian percentage of gross national income for ODA spending idling at less than half of the committed target, genuine support is in short supply.


Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressing the UN assembly.

CRWRC's 2010 Gift Catalog indicates which gifts help fulfill the UN's MDGs using these icons.

Until the Canadian government sufficiently corrects the problems of privatized development, non-coherent aid policy and business oriented aid-ideology – all of which were reflected in the rest of Harper's UN address – Canadians should expect nothing more than their achievements being marked, even by their own leaders, as "disappointing."

Hendrik Vlaar (hendrik.vlaar@gmail.com) *is a Redeemer University College graduate. He is currently in the process of coming to grips with reality.*

Kagame *continued*

lived in fear of ethnic killings. And he sees today how the capital city of Kigali is one of the safest and cleanest cities in Africa and how, in spite of poverty, farming has improved due to agricultural cooperatives and the increase in fertilizers, cows and soil stability.

Yet others are looking beyond these obvious improvements to some of the more disturbing details. "What does the economy stand for when 50 percent of the children are malnourished?" writes journalist Yoletta Nyange. "Who does the annual economic growth of 8.3 percent and $500m of foreign investment benefit when 60 percent of the country lives below the poverty level on just $0.43 daily?"

Silencing the opposition

These are questions which overshadow Kagame's third and final term. While a beloved husband to Jeannette Nyiramongi and a father of four, not to mention an avid tennis player and football fan, the president has an ice-cold side which has become even more frigid with passing years. His defences are up, says Nyange, for the country is turning resentful, as only 12 percent have access to electricity and "some 90 percent subsist on agriculture, and feel bitter about the government's plan to push horticulture, call centers and mining services forward on their empty stomachs."

And while a justice system is in place, it's corrupt, Nyange explains. With the highest incarceration rate next to the United States and Russia, "intellectuals are dead, jailed or in exile."

The latter was made apparent in the past election, as none of Kagame's three challengers was considered a sincere option, and the ones who had been were eliminated. A promising opposition leader and her American lawyer were arrested; an investigative journalist who wrote about the attempted assassination of a dissident journalist was shot in the head hours before his story was posted, and another opposition leader was killed, his head close-to-severed.

While Kagame denies any participation in these killings, stating that it was not his duty to create the so-called credible opposition, he also admits to repressing free expression because "peace in Rwanda is still very fragile," he explains.

Cycles of violence

Establishing peace has been a lifelong passion for the Tutsi tribe-member, forced to flee Rwanda at the age of three when the Rwandan Hutus rose up against his people. In 1975, at 18 years old, Kagame joined a Ugandan rebel force and eventually became head of intelligence. When Rwandan refugees decided to assume their land 15 years later, Kagame took command of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a political movement formed by Tutsi exiles in 1979. Under Kagame's leadership, the organization grew from 4,000 men to approximately 14,000, and a counter-genocide proceeded, murdering hundreds of thousands of Hutu and sending countless others into exile.

Human rights defenders around the world see Kagame as a "genocidaire."

As former UN Ambassador Robert Krueger wrote in *Foreign Policy*, "They had been coming at a rate of more than 1,000 a day since Kagame's victory, and were living on bare ground under blue plastic sheeting provided by the United Nations, stretched over branches torn from surrounding trees. When I asked them when they would return home, they invariably replied, 'Whenever the RPF stops killing us.'"

In 1994, following a mysterious plane crash which killed Rwanda's president Juvenal Habyarimana and a period during which more than 800,000 Tutsis and nominal Hutus were killed by Hutu death squads, the RPF seized control and Kagame, presidency.

Having met with Kagame, a well-spoken, "rail-thin" man in a too-big suit, two months after the RPF captured the capital city, Krueger states, "I knew there would be no equal justice or real democracy as long as Kagame held power."

Idolized for years by the western world, Kagame, closely connected to Costco, Google and Starbucks, has made Rwanda the "darling of the aid community" – yet rights groups are beginning to sit up and take notice. While he's gotten rid of the death penalty, restored freedom to women and established new technologies, Kagame – desperate to erase ethnic barriers – has jailed thousands for attempted "divisionism" or "genocide ideology," simply for using the terms "Hutu" or "Tutsi."

"Censorship is widespread," Krueger states, "and some citizens have been imprisoned for suggesting that Tutsis have killed Hutus for ethnic reasons, just as Hutus have undoubtedly killed Tutsis. When I asked a Scandinavian missionary who had lived over 30 years in Rwanda and Burundi to share his opinion of the president, he replied, 'Paul Kagame is one of the greatest murderers on the continent of Africa. There is blood all over his hands.'"

Nevertheless, the newly re-elected president who's white-washed the streets beneath which hundreds of thousands lie has won the hearts of many Rwandans such as Billy Muga, a 20-year-old genocide survivor who recently completed schooling on a government scholarship.

"Some people with ethnic ideology don't like our president," Muga said. "Other people say our president is a gift from God. Without him, I would not be where I am now. I would have been a street boy."

Emily Wierenga (www.emilywierenga.com) *is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and son in Neerlandia, AB.*

News

Everyday Christian
Cathy Smith

My friends and I change the world

Country singer Johnny Reid has a new song called "Today I'm Gonna Try and Change the World." The lyrics are appealing: "I'm gonna say hello to my neighbour/ Shake the hand of a stranger/Today I'm gonna try and change the world."

But I've got Johnny beat. My friends and I didn't just *try* to change the world. We did!

Heather and Audrey participated in the Ride for Refuge in London on October 2nd. They are busy moms. Audrey runs a daycare in her home. Heather is a reporter for *Sarnia This Week*. The time and energy it took to be involved in the ride was definitely sacrificial. So, of course, I volunteered to sponsor them.

Both women rode on behalf of the CRWRC. Heather organized a pasta supper at her church. Audrey unabashedly canvassed every person she knew. They biked in a torrential downpour. Together they raised over $3000, among the highest fundraisers of the 162 riders.

Grace and Gertie are members of our church's HANDS Team, a group signed up with Worldwide Christian Schools to work in the Dominican Republic next February. The team held a dinner on October 15, raising a substantial sum towards construction materials and accommodations. Excitement is building as our church rallies behind them to reach out beyond our walls in the name of Christ. I attended the dinner and, of course, wrote a cheque.

Theresa is part of a committee that organizes an annual Golf Tournament in October to benefit our local Christian school. She's my neighbour, a fellow gardener and church member. Mark and I usually play in the tournament, but we couldn't this year, so we sponsored a hole instead.

Maggie is our church custodian. She's on the Enfolding/ Evangelism Committee. October is Clergy Appreciation Month, so Maggie and the committee collected funds to deliver a surprise basket of goodies to our pastor and his family. I love that. It's important to encourage and sustain pastors. You guessed it . . . I handed over a few bucks.

Harry headed up a committee to install a new audio-visual system in our church. He spent months scoping out ideas to upgrade the technological aspects of our worship. The goal is to maximize both the sound and visual delivery systems for the benefit of our seniors. On October 4th, Harry and a bunch of other volunteers roughed in the new system. My pledge came due!

The one, the many

I'm honoured to call these individuals my friends. They are doers. They don't wait for someone else to volunteer. But each one would be quick to point out the network of community support for their endeavours. And I believe my encouragement, prayer and practical monetary contributions are part of that group dynamic. Keeping it real here, my wallet is lighter by $960. That's sacrificial, too.

Mother Teresa said, "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." My friends and I have done some small things with great love. But are we really any different than Johnny Reid? Like him, aren't we just "trying" to make the world a better place? Stacked up against the weight of global poverty and injustice and the mounting cost of local ministries, our efforts may seem feather-light.

But we find our hope in Jesus Christ. His was *the great thing* done with great love – bearing a world of sin in his own body, enduring hell itself, so the world could be changed. Any unselfish deed we try, whether it's "saying hello to a neighbour," biking in a marathon, going on a mission trip, organizing a golf tournament, sending a gift basket, or making a donation, if it's grounded in the victory of our Saviour's resurrection, it's already added to the coming of the kingdom in this world and bears the stamp of eternal value for the next. Jesus, the firstfruits of the dead, changed the world. He changed the world so miraculously that our "small things" are engrafted into his "great thing." He said so himself: "I have called you friends – I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last" (John 15:15, 16).

I'd like to tell Johnny Reid this: if *we* try to change the world, we will be defeated. But, *in Christ*, every smile, every cup of cold water, and every penny counts.

Cathy Smith (cathysmith001@hotmail.com) *is a contributing editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ont.*

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Hong Kong Christian leaders urge release of Nobel laureate Liu

Francis Wong

HONG KONG (ENI) – Hong Kong Christian leaders have urged the government in Beijing to release 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liu Xiaobo, who was honoured for his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China." Representatives from the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong and the Christian Concern Hong Kong Society joined activists in petitioning the Chinese government's liaison office in Hong Kong soon after the announcement of the prize in Oslo on October 8. They asked Beijing to release Liu, who initiated the "08 Charter" that asked for greater democracy and respect for human rights. More than 10,000 people in China and overseas had signed the charter.

In 2009, one year after the release of the charter, Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison and two years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting the subversion of State power." Liu has consistently maintained that the sentence violates both China's constitution and fundamental human rights. The Hong Kong Catholic commission and a number of civil groups said in a joint statement that Liu is a long time defender of human rights and deserves the Nobel honour. It also criticised the Chinese government for pressuring the Norwegian Nobel Committee and warning it not to confer the prize on Liu.

Speaking in his personal capacity, the general secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Rev. Po Kam Cheong, said he was overjoyed with the result and believes that Liu "absolutely" deserves the prize. "Liu has spent many years in the struggle, in a peaceful way, for greater democracy in China," Po said. "And he has suffered for this cause."

In announcing the result, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said that China has achieved economic advances in recent years and that its new status brings increased responsibility. It said China "is in breach of several international agreements to which it is a signatory, as well as of its own provisions concerning political rights."

Liu Xia, the wife of Liu Xiaobo, said in Beijing she was joyful at the result and was proud of her husband. She said that she would tell Liu the news when she visits him the following day. She said she wished that her husband will soon be released to enjoy freedom again.

In Beijing, however, China's foreign ministry said in a statement that Liu is a criminal, and that he has nothing to do with the spirit of the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Editorials

Stand by CC

Bert Witvoet

The last two years of the existence of *Christian Courier* have been encouraging. After the passing of editor Harry der Nederlanden, and my interim re-assumption of editorial duties, the Board of Reformed Faith Witness was able to appoint two young co-editors, Angela Reitsma Bick and Brett Alan Dewing, and through them, attract younger writers. The re-invigoration of the paper was immediately evident, although you might be surprised how many former readers of *CC* have not yet noticed the changes that have taken place. They live in the sad ignorance of thinking that *CC* stands for old-hat *Calvinist Contact*, which they saw as too inwardly-turned. It never was that exactly, but *CC was* in danger of dying off with Opa and Oma. At the turn of the millennium, it seemed that *CC* had served its earlier immigrant purpose and was in the process of publishing its own obituary on page 17.

God had something else in mind.

The strength of *CC* always has been that the Reformed world and life view continually offers new and relevant ways of discerning our society and culture, reminding us of our task to take the gospel of Jesus Christ into the every-day world of politics, business, the arts, education and personal sanctification. It proclaimed that message from its first editor Dick Farenhorst in the 1950s to its recent editor Harry der Nederlanden. Because of that, *CC* is worth keeping.

"I have long felt that *CC* has been a jewel in our community," one of our columnists recently remarked, "and we have been well served by its editors and staff." It's a jewel worth polishing up – a task our young editors have been busy doing.

Day by day

At the moment we are stepping into a different phase of *CC*'s existence. The Board of Reformed Faith Witness has accepted my resignation as co-editor and has appointed Angela Reitsma Bick as the main editor. Brett Alan Dewing continues as Features editor till the end of this year, at which time another Features editor will be appointed. It's time for my generation to step back and let the younger generation take over the helm. They are very capable, very grounded in Reformed biblical thinking, and they understand better than someone like myself what the needs are of the 21st-century world citizen living in North America.

A week ago, my wife and I attended Robert VanderVennen's presentation of the history of the Institute for Christian Studies, based on his book *A University for the People*. In the discussion that followed, some people were wondering about the continued viability of this institute. President Robert Sweetman remarked that the Institute lives from day to day, "but it lives," he added with a smile. Perhaps living from day to day is in line with the Lord's prayer when it asks God to "give us this day our daily bread." Manna should not be gathered for the following day, unless it's the day before the Sabbath. *Christian Courier* is no exception to that rule. We live a day-by-day existence, **but we live!**

Where are you?

Retired Senior Member Calvin Seerveld observed that the "Pray-ers and Pay-ers" of the Institute are dying off. His comment suggests that the next generation is not replacing these "Pray-ers and Pay-ers" in sufficient quantity or with the same generosity. That suggestion applies to *CC* as well. Where are you, young, middle-aged believers in the culturally relevant message of the Kingdom?

I am asking you, people in the Reformed community, to stand by *CC* and its new editor. I am specifically asking the younger generation to take up the Blackberry torch and gather around the young editors and writers of *CC*. Stop borrowing your mother's copy. Take out an on-line subscription to light up your iPad. Buy a gift subscription for your cousin. Send our writers a note of encouragement. And pray – pray for this Kingdom endeavour.

I wish I could quote John Lennon's wonderful lyrics as a hymn:

"When the night has come / And the land is dark / And the moon is the only light we'll see. / No I won't be afraid, no I won't be afraid / Just as long as you stand, stand by me." But as most of you know, it's not a hymn to God by any stretch of the imagination. Just the same, it doesn't hurt to stand by *CC*, because there are times when the moon is the only light we see in our sin-soaked world.

Bert Witvoet served as editor of Calvinist Contact, *later renamed* Christian Courier, *from 1982 till 1999. He and his wife, Alice, live in St. Catharines, Ontario.*

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by *Christian Courier* or the publisher. Please contact circulation if you cannot afford the subscription price but want to receive *Christian Courier*.
The paper is published the second & fourth Mondays of the month.

Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities. Canada

The glory of plodding

Kevin DeYoung

It's sexy among young people – my generation – to talk about ditching institutional religion and starting a revolution of real Christ-followers living in real community without the confines of church. Besides being unbiblical, such notions of churchless Christianity are unrealistic. It's immaturity actually.... Without the God-given habit of corporate worship and the God-given mandate of corporate accountability, we will not prove faithful over the long haul.

What we need are fewer revolutionaries and a few more plodding visionaries. That's my dream for the church – a multitude of faithful, risk-taking plodders. The best churches are full of gospel-saturated people holding tenaciously to a vision of godly obedience and God's glory, and pursuing that godliness and glory with relentless, often unnoticed, plodding consistency.

My generation in particular is prone to radicalism without follow-through. We have dreams of changing the world, and the world should take notice accordingly. But we've not proved faithful in much of anything yet. We haven't held a steady job or raised godly kids or done our time in VBS or, in some cases, even moved off the parental dole. We want global change and expect a few more dollars to the ONE campaign or Habitat for Humanity chapter to just about wrap things up.

More Bonos?

What the church and the world needs, we imagine, is for us to be another Bono – Christian, but more spiritual than religious and more into social justice than the church.... With all due respect, what's harder: to be an idolized rock star who travels around the world touting good causes and chiding governments for their lack of foreign aid, or to be a line worker at GM with four kids and a mortgage, who tithes to his church, sings in the choir every week, serves on the school board, and supports a Christian relief agency and a few missionaries from his disposable income?

Until we are content with being one of the million nameless, faceless church members and not the next globe-trotting rock star, we aren't ready to be a part of the church. In the grand scheme of things, most of us are going to be more of an Ampliatus (Rom. 16:8) or Phlegon (v.14) than an apostle Paul. And maybe that's why so many Christians are getting tired of the church. We haven't learned how to be part of the crowd. We haven't learned to be ordinary.

Our jobs are often mundane. Our devotional times often seem like a waste. Church services are often forgettable. That's life.... Life is usually pretty ordinary, just like following Jesus most days. Daily discipleship is not a new revolution each morning or an agent of global transformation every evening; it's a long obedience in the same direction.

It's possible the church needs to change. Certainly in some areas it does. But it's also possible we've changed – and not for the better. It's possible we no longer find joy in so great a salvation. It's possible that our boredom has less to do with the church, its doctrines, or its poor leadership and more to do with our unwillingness to tolerate imperfection in others and our own coldness to the same old message about Christ's death and resurrection. It's possible we talk a lot about authentic community but we aren't willing to live in it.

Call to faithfulness

The church is not an incidental part of God's plan. Jesus didn't invite people to join an anti-religion, anti-doctrine, anti-institutional bandwagon of love, harmony, and re-integration. He showed people how to live, to be sure. But he also called them to repent, called them to faith, called them out of the world, and called them into the church. The Lord "didn't add them to the church without saving them, and he didn't save them without adding them to the church" (John Stott).

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). If we truly love the church, we will bear with her in her failings, endure her struggles, believe her to be the beloved bride of Christ, and hope for her final glorification. The church is the hope of the world – not because she gets it all right, but because she is a body with Christ for her Head.

Don't give up on the church. The New Testament knows nothing of churchless Christianity. The invisible church is for invisible Christians. The visible church is for you and me. Put away the Che Guevara t-shirts, stop the revolution, and join the rest of the plodders. Fifty years from now you'll be glad you did.

Rev. Kevin DeYoung is senior pastor of University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan. His article is reprinted with permission from Tabletalk, *May, 2010.*

Letter

How would you like to die?

Nick Loenen

One hundred years ago my father was born. Fifty years ago he died. I was sixteen and the people said, "Your father had a good death." What did they mean?

They did not mean that death at fifty leaving behind a wife and five children is a good thing. No, there were plenty of tears. They meant Dad died well. Fifty years ago among Christians it was still considered important to die well. What did it mean to die well?

During the last month of my father's life many, perhaps most members of our congregation came to visit, sometimes alone, sometimes in small groups. They came to sit with him for a while, often in silence, but also to say farewell, to straighten out misunderstandings, to apologize for past offences, to ask if Dad was ready to meet God and was he at peace, to read a scripture, sing a psalm, and offer a prayer.

Above all, Dad had a good death because he was at peace, after initial struggles he received grace to let go of his family, his friends, his work and all the world offers. He died in the assurance of full forgiveness, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. A good death, because his last weeks were full of Christian hope, and carried by the congregation he experienced the community of the saints. Death disclosed life. As he was dying he celebrated life. As he let go of earth he saw heaven.

The funeral

That celebration of life climaxed in the funeral service. The focus was not on my father, because unlike today, fifty years ago a funeral service did not include eulogies and slide shows to highlight the deceased's achievements and fun times. Dad's service was a Christian funeral service – words of comfort were spoken, we heard that this life is preparation for life to come, that the purpose of life is to mature morally and grow spiritually. We heard that love is stronger than death. We sang majestic hymns with a pipe organ, hymns about the multitude no one can number, the water of life that flows from the throne of God, and about the New Jerusalem without night were sickness and death will be no more.

Dad's funeral service, complete with pall bearers and a coffin in church, marked his transition from here to there, it looked forward to the resurrection and the life to come, it connected earth and heaven. In contrast, modern, sanitized, "Celebration of Life" memorial services look back at the life just ended, as though that is all there is with little emphasis on what lies ahead. But what is Christian about that? Is this secularism dressed up? If we downplay the most central teaching of Christianity, what hope is there? Paul says without the resurrection our faith is bogus, empty. Conducting such services in a church makes it appear Christian, but is it? Do we know how to die well? What does it mean today to have a good death? How would you like to die?

My preference

I hope to die the way my father did, surrounded by family and friends who care enough to actually ask if I am ready. To have the time to prepare, to receive God's grace to let go, and to hear the music of heaven while on earth – that would be a good death.

As for the funeral service, let there be a coffin in the church to facilitate appropriate mourning and grieving. Let the family members enter each with a palm branch to be draped over the plain casket thus symbolizing the resurrection of the body and turning mourning into joy. May the message of the resurrection and life without end give comfort and inspiration to all, especially the children. And let there be singing, *"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," "By the Sea of Crystal,"* and similar hymns and psalms that have comforted bereaved Christians in all times and places.

I prefer not to have a slideshow and eulogies. If there must be a eulogy, keep it for the reception and make it short. And don't talk about achievements; talk about character, fruits of the Spirit, and evidence of growing in grace. A Christian funeral should be a celebration of life rooted in the promises of the Gospel, a service that looks forward to the next life. If that is not the basis of our hope, there is no hope. For a death to be a good death it must point to God and the life hereafter.

To die well is to die in the Lord, and that is a gift of grace, but we have a part to play as well. Our preparations and practises can help or hinder the flow of God's grace. We can quench the Spirit. Peter Kreeft in his excellent book *Love Is Stronger Than Death* notes that how people treat death flows from what they think about life. If the purpose of life is fun, death is avoided, but if the purpose of this life is to prepare for the life to come, than death is life's culmination and worth talking about. Dying well requires a community. As a community we should talk about making the transition from this life to the next, meaningfully.

What are your thoughts? How would you like to die? Perhaps, you have hardly thought about a topic we mostly shun, but can't avoid. Good resources include Rob Moll, *The Art of Dying*, IVP Books (2010) and Peter Kreeft, *Love is Stronger than Death*, Ignatius Press (1979).

Nick Loenen (nloenen@shaw.ca) *lives in Richmond, B.C.*

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Why has international aid been so much slower to Pakistan than it was to Haiti? Send your answers to *editor@christiancourier.ca.*

What do YOU think? – A personal question

Send your response to Nick Loenen's letter via *editor@christiancourier.ca.*

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two yrs. (48 issues)	$90.00	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Wednesday, 9 a.m. (12 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca
Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca **PRINTED IN CANADA**

News

British shops reluctant to sell Christian Easter eggs

LONDON (TCI) – British supermarkets are reluctant to stock an Easter egg which mentions Jesus Christ and his crucifixion, the Church of England (CoE) has warned.

"The Real Easter Egg," produced for and distributed by the Church of England, contains a panel which explains that Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and resurrected on Easter Sunday, and its packaging depicts a hill with three crosses on it. But during negotiations with businesses the church found that some large chains said they did not want to stock "such overtly religious products for children." A statement on the church's website cautions, "Despite the obvious demand – 80 million a year – not all UK supermarkets are planning to stock the egg next year."

On the other hand, two of the supermarket chains who have not yet made a decision said that in principle they were not opposed to selling the eggs. A spokesman for one of those, Waitrose, said, "We have asked the supplier for more infor-mation on this new product, but in principle it is something that we would be really interested in." And a spokesman for the Co-op said that that company hadn't made a decision yet.

No Christian understanding

Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester, welcomed the eggs. "There are over 80 million chocolate Easter Eggs sold each year in the UK and, incredibly, not one of them mentions the Christian understanding of Easter on the box," he said.

Bishop McCulloch added, "We hope that all our supermarkets will stock the first and only Easter egg in the UK that explains the significance of Easter and, through the charitable donation, brings to light the Easter themes of hope and new life."

Nearly 8,000 faith-based schools are being encouraged to buy the eggs, which will be made from fair-trade chocolate. Donations from the profits will be given to two charities, Baby Lifeline and Traidcraft Exchange. The The eggs were developed in consultation with a number of CoE parishes and dioceses by the Manchester-based The Meaningful Chocolate Company.

A year ago in September it was revealed that thousands of schools were adopting a standardized spring break, rather than moving it to coincide with Easter. Research by *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper found that schools in one-third of local authority areas had adopted a fixed two-week break. Religious leaders criticized the move for downplaying the significance of Easter for the sake of convenience.

Manitoba: Orthodox archbishop accused of abuse

WINNIPEG (CatholicCulture) – Archbishop Seraphim Storheim, leader of the Orthodox Church in America's Archdiocese of Canada, is taking a leave of absence from his post after being accused of sexual abuse.

Winnipeg police are investigating claims that the archbishop sexually abused boys when he was a priest in Winnipeg three decades ago. Two men have accused the archbishop of abusing them in the early 1980s while they visited Winnipeg when they were 10 years old.

"I find it extremely disturbing that they have kept this a secret, I find it disturbing that they have not suspended this man from his duties and his responsibility, and taken him out of his position of power over innocent people," Cappy Larson told the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Larson is a San Francisco-based co-founder of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) Orthodox, which calls itself a resource for abuse survivors in Orthodox churches. "I'm very upset that there are young boys who are possibly in danger and they have done nothing to warn any of the parents or anybody in the diocese," said Larson. Larson's group has criticized church leaders for "secrecy and delays."

What's the truth?

The archbishop, who at this point has not been charged with a crime, started a leave of absence at the beginning of October. Bishop Irénée (Rochon) of Quebec City will fill in for Storheim for "however long it takes," he said. He added that the church's Canadian office is surprised by the allegations. "We don't know anything. We were never contacted by anybody . . . nobody ever phoned us or told us anything specifically," he told the *Free Press*. He added that the archbishop himself "claims he doesn't know anything about it" and is troubled by the news.

The archbishop, born Seraphim Storheim, was ordained as a priest in 1979 in New York and was at a church in Winnipeg from 1984 to 1987 before moving to Edmonton as a bishop.

An Orthdox church leader in New York said they have been "co-operating" with the Winnipeg police after police contacted them in late September. In a statement released on Sunday, Sept. 26, the archbishop wrote that he had requested a leave in response to the allegations, and that church officials are working with police to "in order to obtain the necessary information needed to bring about a proper resolution."

"We offer our heartfelt prayers to the Great Shepherd and Healer, our Lord Jesus Christ, that all parties involved in this will be blessed with God's peace, love and healing," said the statement.

Saudis charge 13 expatriates with proselytizing

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (ChristianPost) – Authorities in Saudi Arabia have charged 12 expatriates from the Philippines and one from France with proselytizing, according to an official at the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh.

Ezzedin H. Tago, the embassy's recently designated diplomatic representative, told the English-language *Arab News* that 12 of the expatriates had been temporarily released through petitions filed by their employers and the 13th was released on bail. "It (their release) did not mean that their case had been settled," Tago clarified in a report on October 6. "If they are proven guilty as charged, they would go back to jail," he said, though proselytizing in Saudi Arabia is punishable by death.

According to reports, the 13 were arrested during a raid of a public mass in early October that was attended by around 150 expatriates. About 100 Christians were detained, but later reports revealed that only the 13 were arrested as there was not enough room at the police station, and the 13 were allegedly the organizers and leaders of the group.

No freedom of religion

In Saudi Arabia, the public practice of non-Muslim religions is strictly prohibited. Non-Muslims are only allowed to gather in homes, not in public places, for private religious services, though the country's Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) has been known to conduct raids on private non-Muslim religious gatherings as well. Conversion by Muslims to another religion (apostasy) and proselytizing by non-Muslims are punishable by death under the Islamic laws adopted by the country.

Under the government's official interpretation of Islam there is no legal recognition or protection of religious freedom. Overall government policies have been known to place severe restrictions on religious freedom, according to the U.S. State Department.

The Philippine Embassy in Riyadh, which was assisting the 12 overseas Fili-pino workers (OFWs) who were arrested, said it is closely monitoring the case and has made representations to the police. No information has been released regarding the French priest who had also been detained.

CRC 'PrayerLine' continues – without the phone

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) — The last message on the Christian Reformed Church's telephone PrayerLine was recorded during the first week of October. That message ended an era that began in 1996 when a group of CRC members arranged for a phone line to be dedicated to passing on prayer requests on behalf of the many ministries of the denomination.

As of October 6 the phone line was no longer in use. But that doesn't mean that this denominational prayer ministry is now defunct. Only the technology has changed. People can continue to contact the PrayerLine via a CRC webpage called "Prayer Support" (<www.crcna.org/pages/prayer_requests.cfm#requests>). Users can read prayer requests from the various church agencies and can sign up for weekly PrayerLine e-mails.

"A chapter is ending. But of course, we'll keep sending the PrayerLine out by e-mail and on the CRC webpage," says Paul Faber. Faber is an editor at Faith Alive Christian Resources, which has helped to take care of the PrayerLine. "Whatever technologies may come, there will remain the need for prayer."

Early on, the phone line became a service for offering weekly updates to the CRC's "Prayer Guide," a monthly paper-publication that goes out to CRC congregations. A few years later, as the CRC launched and developed a website, the Prayer Line expanded its reach by posting a weekly web update.

Requests available on the phone line during its last week included the following:

From CRWRC: Thank God for the successful participatory learning process CRWRC is using in Zambia. Participants are now saying that "true and significant learning happens when all, including the 'expert' with his/her material, listen, contribute, participate, express thoughts and feelings, and dialog with respect and openness." Pray for the participants' continuing education and strength as they put these practices into action.

From Faith Alive Christian Resources: Pray for Faith Alive staff, writers, and consultants as they prepare two new curricula for the new year as well as various Bible studies and other resources. May the Holy Spirit's guidance be evident in all of these efforts for the church, that "the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12).

From Disability Concerns: With Faith and Hope Ministries we have produced a new small group study titled Let's Talk! Breaking the Silence Around Mental Illness in Our Communities of Faith. Pray that groups that use this series will have meaningful and loving conversations about mental illnesses.

From Home Missions: Give thanks with us for The Table church plant in Bellingham, Washington. Pray that God will provide wisdom for leaders, community for the isolated, and encouragement for this new congregation.

From Calvin College: Pray for wisdom for the administrators of Calvin College as they cast vision for a Christ-centered institution with the Board of Trustees this week. Pray for passion and zeal for the kingdom work they are called to do here.

PrayerLine requests are now available only via Internet.

German Christians call for Santa-free Christmas

BERLIN (Reuters) – Getting a head-start on preparing for what secular people now call "The Holidays," a group of German Catholics has announced that it wants to do away with Santa Claus.

The jolly fictional figure is surrounded by more and more commercial hype every year, says the *Bonifatiuswerk* of German Catholics, a Christian aid organization. So they want him replaced with St. Nicolas [German spelling] and the selfless giving they say that saint represents. The group has begun calling for "Santa Claus-free zones."

The *Bonifatiuswerk* says Santa is "an invention of the advertising industry designed to boost sales." The fictional gift-bringer is "a representative of consumer society" who has little to do with the historical figure of St. Nicolas, they say.

The group's website describes Nicolas as the patron saint of children and as "a helper in need who reminds us to be kind, to think of our neighbors and to give the gift of happiness."

The campaign is being supported by several German celebrities. "Unlike Santa Claus, Nicolas wants to give children inner riches and not just encourage them to strive for material wealth," German TV presenter Nina Ruege is quoted saying.

Black Christians largely absent from U.S. missionary force

NORCROSS, Georgia (TCP) – Richard Coleman has a passion for missions. But he's concerned that many of his fellow African-Americans aren't on the same page with him.

Black churches overall have not been reinforcing the missionary force out of the United States. And Coleman is hoping they'll confront their longstanding lack of involvement and make their way overseas to the millions who have never heard of Jesus.

According to the 2007 African American Missions Mobilization Manifesto by Columbia International University, blacks make up less than one percent of the total number (118,600) of American missionaries.

But Coleman, who serves as the director of candidacy and mobilization for The Mission Society, didn't have to look to statistics to realize that blacks were largely absent from the mission fields. While attending Oral Roberts University he became involved in short-term missions for the first time. It was during his first trip that he gained a passion for missions. He was 19 at the time, and visiting Uganda.

'How come they don't come?'

The university in Tulsa, Oklahoma, sent 200-300 students every summer on mission trips. But Coleman noticed only a handful were black. "Then when I went to Africa, Africans would say 'Where are the blacks? How come they don't come?'" the 32-year-old evangelical recalled.

After receiving an M. Div. degree, Coleman served as the director of missions at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga. That megachurch had some 25,000 attendees but sent out only two or three full-time missionaries. And only 20 people went on short-term mission trips every year.

Now on staff at The Mission Society, Coleman again is seeing only a handful of African Americans among the more than 200 missionaries who are being trained and sent to minister around the world. "The issue continues. It's something I've carried with me here," he laments.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has less than 10 missionaries serving in the world, he says. And other black churches are no better.

Identifying with struggles

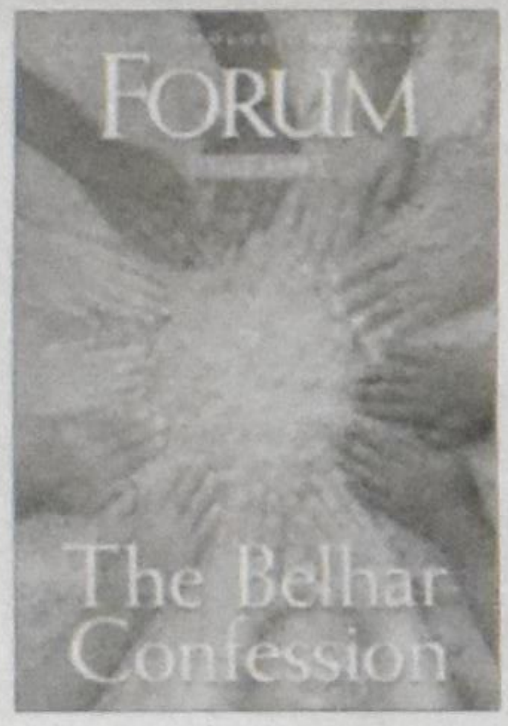
Supporting families and the community is one of the reasons African-American churches have not been involved in cross-cultural missions, according to Coleman. Compared to white Protestant churches, there are a lot of needs in the black church, the Atlanta native pointed out. "Just think of the number of hurting people at a black church who have lost their jobs or can't get a job and they usually turn to the church for help," he said. "And the

church is paying light bills and that kind of stuff. So you kind of reason 'Why would I give money to these people overseas who I don't know when people among me are hurting?'"

Coleman understands the history behind some decisions being made today and simply wants to encourage black churches to get back on board with sharing Jesus to the 1.8 billion people who have never heard of his Name. He believes African Americans are uniquely poised to have a big impact on global evangelism. They identify with suffering, he said.

"People around the world have heard that story and have seen the overcoming of struggles," he noted. "Black churches have a message of encouragement for the world." Coleman made clear that he does not want to tell these churches what to do, but he wants to help them "to approach God and their church community to discover what unique place God has called them to serve."

Calvin Sem 'focuses' on *Belhar Confession*



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) faculty members make forceful, well-reasoned and passionate arguments for and against the *Belhar Confession* in articles published in the most recent issue of "Forum," the seminary's quarterly publication.

The CTS faculty members all seem to agree that the Belhar, written by church leaders in South Africa, is a ringing call for racial equality and justice worldwide. Where they disagree is on whether Synod 2012 should grant it confessional status, i.e., adopt it one of the confessions or forms or standards of unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Convinced that church members needed time to review and discuss the Belhar, Synod 2009 decided to give the church three years to consider its adoption, which would then be voted on by the Synod of 2012. Between now and 2012 various gatherings will be organized at which the Belhar will be the focus.

Some have already occurred. Calvin Seminary held a panel discussion on the Belhar on Oct. 12 in the seminary auditorium. The discussion was recorded and will be broadcast live on the seminary lecture page online (<www.calvinseminary.edu/calendar/lectureCalendar.php?archive=1>)

Toward a unified, multi-ethnic church

To help church members in general better understand the Belhar, CTS presented the wide-ranging discussion contained in the Fall 2010 "Forum."

"Forged in the fires of racial injustice in South Africa in 1986, the *Belhar Confession* speaks eloquently to the need for unity, reconciliation and justice in the church," wrote Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. in an introduction to that issue of "Forum." But response to the proposal to make the Belhar a fourth confession of the CRCNA, placing it on par with the *Belgic Confession*, the *Canons of Dort*, and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, are varied in the church as well as among faculty at CTS, Plantinga noted.

Avila

Mariano Avila, professor of New Testament, wrote, "The adoption of the *Belhar Confession* will help the CRC move closer" to becoming a "multi-ethnic church that promotes racial justice." Adoption of the Belhar, said Avila, "will help us in our ministry to the world, for the Belhar speaks in a powerful way to the sinful racist realities that are far from being eradicated from our hearts and societies."

The Belhar was first adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1986. It was written as a response to apartheid, the legalized and socially sanctioned separation of the races in South Africa. In following years, that church merged with another church. But the new church held on to the Belhar and asked other Reformed denominations to adopt it.

Veers from orthodox teaching

While admitting that the Belhar has power and value and ought to be taken seriously, especially given its theme and message, John Bolt wrote that he believes that the Belhar veers, in places, from orthodox Christian teaching and offers an alternative path for achieving reconciliation and unity. Bolt is a professor of systematic theology at CTS.

Bolt

"The key to this alternative path is the Belhar's focus on the social, economic and political arenas as the locus for achieving reconciliation and unity, rather than on our spiritual poverty (as people who rely on God's grace and find their unity in the blood of Christ)," wrote Bolt. "I strongly desire a testimony that exposes the sin of racism and points us forward to reconciliation and unity. I do not believe the Belhar will or even can accomplish this."

But Ronald Feenstra, professor of systematic and philosophical theology, calls the Belhar "one of the church's treasures." He wrote, "Speaking from the pit of oppression and suffering, the Belhar affirms important biblical themes such as the triune God's care for the church and concern for justice."

'Problematically ambiguous'

Confessions of the church can help people better understand how their denomination understands the Bible and the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, said Lyle Bierma, professor of systematic theology at CTS. "They also serve as testimonies or statements of identity," writes Bierma. "In this role, the Belhar Confession would help the CRC to present a somewhat different face to the world than we have in the past." It is not perfect, he added, but it would allow the CRC "to engage in biblical truths that are muted in our confessions . . . (and would) hold ourselves more accountable for sins of the past and behavior in the future."

Cooper

John Cooper, professor of philosophical theology at CTS, thinks the Belhar has merit and addresses important issues but should not be elevated to the status of being a confession, a fully sanctioned, synodically approved teaching and preaching document, of the CRC.

It should be made a contemporary testimony on a level with and subject to the doctrines contained in "Our World Belongs to God," the CRC's current contemporary testimony, said Cooper. "My view is this: Properly understood, the Belhar's condemnation of racism, expression of solidarity with victims, and affirmation of racial reconciliation in Christ are crucial implications of the Gospel that we should endorse. But its theological perspective is problematically ambiguous."

Columns

From the Lab
Rudy Eikelboom

'She looks just like her mother'

When in 2001 the human genome was initially sequenced, determining the order of the nucleotide bases, scientists were surprised to discover that it contained not 100,000 to 140,000 genes as they had expected, but rather only about 23,000 genes. One significant question raised by this surprising discovery about our DNA is how this relatively small number of genes can result in the rich diversity one sees all around in humans, and how it can explain the difference between God's image bearers – humans – and the other animals seen in creation. Another way to phrase this problem is that humans and chimpanzees, very similar genetically, are so different in other ways. Since 2001, scientists have begun to answer these questions using a phenomenon that they call epigenetics.

Epigenetics refers to the many processes that control the expression and activation of genes. These controls, which have been shown to be very complicated, multiply the effects of genes in particular cells. All cells in your body have the same genetic material (half from your father, half from your mother), but in each cell specific genes are regulated differently; that is, they are turned on and off, causing differences between cells. Evidence for these epigenetic processes is the obvious fact that blood, brain, and muscle cells differ. Biologists are studying how these cells come to differ over development. There are many different chemical processes that cause undifferentiated cells to becoming bone or eye cells.

With only one exception (the XX gene in females and XY gene in males), each of our cells has two copies of our genes, one from each parent. Each parent's copy of the gene may be slightly different and have different consequences. One big question is which copy of the gene is expressed (has an effect). We have long known that some genes have dominant and recessive variants. Eye colour is one example; there are different copies of the gene, one for brown eyes and the other for blue (and a few others). In this case the brown gene is dominant, meaning that if your child has one or two copies of the brown gene, his/her eyes will be brown. Only if your child has two copies of the blue gene are the eyes blue. (This means that two brown-eyed parents may still have a blue-eyed child.) But for many genes there is no dominant gene and we thought that the expressed gene was chosen randomly.

Imprinting changes the rules

In a recent issue of *Science*, two articles using mice pointed to a new and potentially important epigenetic process to determine which gene was expressed, the phenomenon of imprinting. In imprinting, the copy of the gene that comes from either father or mother is always expressed, and the copy from the other parent remains silent. This provides a way for the specific parent's gene to control what happens in the child. Apparently, there are quite a few genes in mouse brain areas important for sex-specific behaviours that have maternal or paternal imprinting. There are also suggestions that as the animal develops, the imprinting may change, such that genes that are expressed around birth may be maternal while later the gene expressed may be paternal. It would be surprising if similar imprinting was not evident in humans.

All the implications of genetic imprinting are not yet clear, but this phenomenon highlights another way that the genes coming from one parent or the other may have preferential expression in the child. If with imprinting each parent's genes get priority for particular behaviours, the simple statement that 50 percent of one's genes come from Mom and 50 percent come from Dad may not really be accurate. It is possible that for certain aspects of a daughter's character, she is much more likely to resemble her father because for this aspect it is his genes which are imprinted. At this point the specifics are not yet clear but we will have to think differently about how the specific parent's genetic contribution impacts their children.

At this time, it is evident that even with the relatively few genes found in humans, each of which controls the expression of a particular protein, the epigenetic processes that control genetic expression are more than sufficient to support the unique and complex nature of humans and related species. Epigenetics provides a scientific way to explain the difference between who we are as God's children and the rest of his creatures.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.

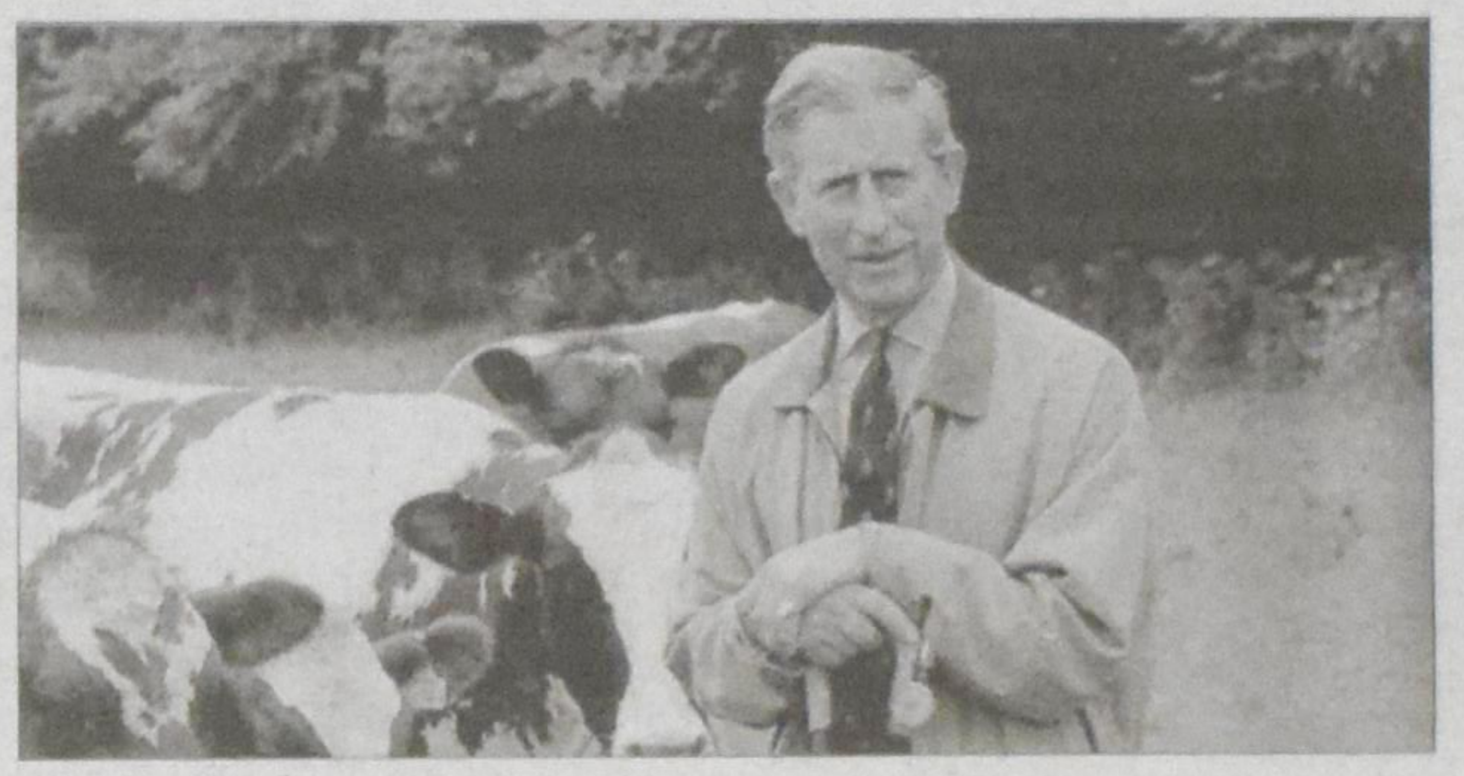
Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

Royal Soil

Uzziah, king of Judah, is one of my favourite Bible characters. He was, the Chronicler tells us, one of those who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD." True, he came to a bad end because of pride, but in his earlier years he was rich, successful in war, a sponsor of public works, a builder and a developer of military hardware.

What makes him stand out to me, however, was the fact that Uzziah "loved the soil." Archaeologists have found evidences of agricultural development in the Negev Desert, where cisterns, terraces, and small water catchment basins apparently made agriculture – not just pastoral pursuits – possible. Some of these terraces have been identified as coming from the time of Uzziah, I'm told. (First Nations peoples in the southwestern U.S.A. developed similar desert-agriculture techniques, remains of which are still being found today.)

Modern scientific farming in the Negev involves making water diversions, cisterns, terraces, paving small or large catchment basins and using drip irrigation. I don't recall any news reports saying that Benjamin Netanyahu "loves the soil," however.



Charles Windsor

Tireless tillers

Prince Charles of the United Kingdom owns vast parts of Cornwall and he gives land tenure to renters who maintain healthy crop rotations, maintain "leys" (pastures) and who use organic methods. Whatever one thinks of the Prince politically, he seems to have put a seal – "Royal Soil" – on a considerable chunk of real estate.

Christian Courier columnist Bert Hielema recently described his own efforts in turning a sandy field into royal soil. So did Maynard van der Galien in a past column in which he described his creation of a perfect potato patch. Farm soil into royal soil.

Gene Logdsdon, a self-titled *contrary farmer* for his opposition to chemicalized, industrial agriculture, once said, "If your gravestone could read, 'Here lies a person who left his land with over five percent organic matter in it,' you could rest assured that you had contributed as much good to the earth as any famed scientist, philosopher, or philanthropist."

I've been privileged to know a few people who "loved the soil." Swiss-Canadian Paul Yeker – a retired beef farmer from Smithers, B.C. – is one. Mrs. Ebeltje Ezinga is another. "Eby" works a garden of vegetable crops and flowers in her Telkwa yard. Her soil is fed by compost but nourished by loving care. There is virtually no reservoir of weed seed in her loamy soil. The only weeds are migrants from roadsides and neighbouring yards. (Weeds don't do well even if they do blow into Eby's garden: one weed last summer succumbed to loneliness, another was paralyzed by fear and didn't develop.)

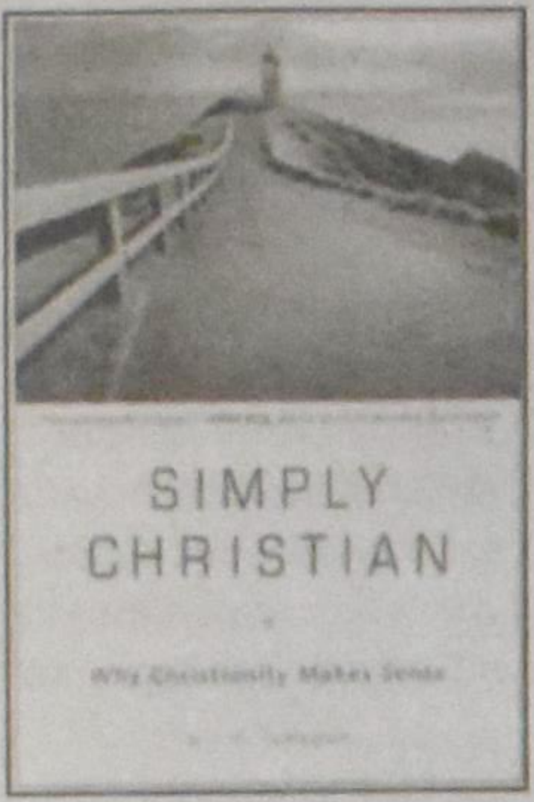
Eby Ezinga

Wouldn't it be something if – in the real estate advertisement of your local paper or on a website – you could read something like this:

For Sale: ROYAL SOIL
HOUSE WITH WONDERFUL GARDEN
GOOD CLIMATE
Offered for sale by the King's family.
Asking price: Stewardship.
Call Uzziah Real Estate for more information.

Curt Gesch (curtgesch@hotmail.com) lives in Telkwa, B.C. He and his wife Betsey enjoy singing "Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil" (Sing! A New Creation, #79).

Reviews



Simply Christian:
Why Christianity Makes Sense
by N. T. Wright (HarperOne, 2006)

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In *Simply Christian*, N. T. Wright has admirably achieved his goal, which was "to describe what Christianity is all about, both to commend it to those outside the faith and to explain it to those inside." Avoiding religious jargon and the assumption of previous biblical knowledge, he explores four areas which currently can be interpreted as "'echoes of a voice': the longing for justice, the quest for spirituality, the hunger for relationships, and the delight in beauty." According to Wright, the postmodern, the post-Christian and the post-secular world can't escape these "echoes of a voice," which are "strange signposts pointing beyond the landscape of our contemporary culture and out into the unknown."

Systematically and thoroughly, Wright surveys the four "echoes" by asking fundamental questions. First, "a sense of justice comes with the kit of being human. So why can't we fix injustice?" Second, humans are spiritual beings. "So what are we to make of 'spirituality' as we listen for the echoes of a voice that might be addressing us?" Third, in terms of human relationships, "how is it that we ache for each other and yet find relationships so difficult?" Fourth, we desire beauty, but, like justice, it slips through our fingers. Why?

A new way of being human

After exploring the four issues, Wright points out that being able to answer these questions, which are pertinent to all people, requires a unique way of knowing. These questions can't be explained by facts or by simple yes-or-no answers. Rather, "to 'know' the deeper kinds of truths we have been hinting at is much more like 'knowing' a person – something which takes a long time, a lot of trust, and a good deal of trial and error." At this juncture, Wright gently focuses readers' attention on the Christian story which "makes sense of our longing for justice, spirituality, relationship, and beauty."

Wright tells the biblical story of redemption by exploring the characters and roles of God, Israel, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He points out that "when we understand Jesus . . . we begin to recognize the voice whose echoes we have heard in the longing for justice, the hunger for spirituality and relationship, and the delight in beauty."

Wright argues that God's rescue operation of the world through Jesus – offering an exodus from sin into new life – isn't just about believers going to heaven when they die. Rather, he says, the Christian way of life is "the new way of being human, the Jesus-shaped way of being human, the cross-and-resurrection way of life, the Spirit-led pathway. It is the way which anticipates, in the present, the full, rich, glad human existence which will one day be ours when God makes all things new. Christian ethics is not a matter of discovering what's going on in the world and getting in tune with it. . . . It is about practising in the present the tunes we shall sing in God's new world."

In other words, the promise of a new heaven and a new earth has ramifications for how we live our lives today. In the latter part of his book, Wright describes what "it looks like in practice to follow this Jesus, to be energized by this Spirit, and above all to advance the plan of this Creator God." Thoughtful and helpful discussions on worship, the Bible and the church point consistently to Jesus, whom Wright repeatedly points out is the Speaker – the voice whose echo we have heard all along.

Simply Christian deepened my understanding of God's grace, enlivened my appreciation of the biblical narrative, encouraged me to continue seeking God's will and heightened my anticipation of the new heaven and the new earth.

Arcade Fire's new album is the most fun you'll ever have in *The Suburbs*

Brett Alan Dewing

Arcade Fire set themselves a tough act to follow. Their first two albums are intricate, cutting, and beautiful. But their recently released third disc manages to raise the bar even higher.

I love concept albums, and Arcade Fire is happy to feed that craving. *The Suburbs* wears its theme on its disc-sleeve. The unique lens through which the titular neighbourhood (as artifact, microcosm, habitat, and internal landscape) is seen feels like something out of *The Prisoner*; there is an awed foreboding and foreign familiarity that perfectly captures the *geist* of our suburb world. (The album seems especially written for Ontario's Golden Horseshoe.)

The music also catches that spirit, with strangely detached festivities and empty flash. Sometimes it feels like you're driving past an endless trail of telephone polls, others it's as if you're caught in a stranger's birthday party. The style is somewhere between MGMT's first album and their second. Yes, a wide gulf is there affixed, but it's an unsettlingly accurate gestalt. There is a markedly strong female presence in the vocals that makes this album seem like a new step for the band.

This is music that is melodic. Not hooky, not rocking, but melodic – a sadly rare thing in today's music scene. And those melodies are top-notch. There's an hour's worth of enthralling music on *The Suburbs*, and it is all excellent – easily in the running for the best album of the year.

The one problem I always have with Arcade Fire is hearing the lyrics. For some reason, their lyrics prove forever elusive to me. But when they do pop out or the tempo slows enough, the words are like guided missiles. Good guided missiles. "We Used To Wait" asks, "It seems strange how we used to wait for letters to arrive. But what's stranger still is how something so small can keep you alive." As it drives faster and faster toward its end, the words repeat: "We used to wait for it. Now we're screaming 'sing the chorus again'."

I see the album as a sonnet. Themes, titles, and sounds recur, all adding up to something larger, rounded out by the closing couplet of "Sprawl I (Flatland)" and "Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains)". The first is an utterly heart-breakingly beautiful elegy that ravishes me every time from the first note to the last word. The second is like an Architecture in Helsinki track. Together, they sum up everything that has come before – the whole sprawling, beautiful hour.

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Features

Women in the early church

Bert den Boggende

One task of historians is to do justice to the past. In this article I will try to do some justice to the many women mentioned in the New Testament.

These women can only be understood properly in the context of the diverse ancient world. Jewish women not only were excluded from public life, but also played no official religious role: they were not required to attend synagogue for Sabbath readings and sermons, and were not counted to ensure a quorum. Religious leaders regarded them as models of impurity with whom men should come into contact as little as possible. Girls and grown women, they held, should not venture beyond the door of the house! Not surprisingly scribes stated that, "He who speaks too much with a woman invites evil, neglects his study of the law, and will end in Gehenna."

Like Jewish women, married Athenian women were also expected to stay indoors. Even shopping was done by slaves (recognized by their uncovered heads) or by their husbands. In Sparta, however, they enjoyed a much greater freedom and in some cases did acquire great wealth. Unlike Jewish women, Greek women played a significant role in religion, notably as a priestess at Delphi, whose oracles were sought beyond Greece. Greek philosophers held two opposing theoretical views. Aristotle, representing the majority view, regarded women as misshapen men and not worthwhile to talk about. Plato, for his utopian republic, suggested that women should be well educated, arguing that they had the same mental capacity as men.

With a few exceptions, such as the vestal virgins and the wife of Jupiter's pontiff, Roman women could not participate in the state's cultic rituals. Nevertheless, they could play important roles in foreign cults, such as the popular Isis cult. Not until the late second century did male guardianship of adult women become a formality, although upper class women had achieved nearly complete emancipation much earlier. In fact, they had so much freedom that the poet Juvenal and the historian Tacitus blamed much of Rome's corruption and immorality on them. In contrast, the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus esteemed women, arguing that it was not only possible but even necessary to educate girls. Having recognized women's capacity for temperance, sexual self-control and courage, he went on to insist that men should demonstrate the same virtues. Clearly, in the Roman Empire men's views of women ranged from regarding women's nature as weak and contemptible to models of virtue. Women could or could not play a role in religion and experienced great or very limited freedom.

The Gospels

Matthew's inclusion of women in Jesus' genealogy constitutes a break with the past and implied a new status. Followers of the 19th century Swiss jurist Jacob Bachofen – many sociologists, Marxists, notably Engels, and radical feminists – might see the inclusion as a remnant of a matriarchy being replaced by a patriarchy. However, Bachofen's evidence has no merit and thus it is safe to say that Matthew's inclusion of women is a novelty.

Luke, usually identified as a Greek doctor, portrays women sympathetically, a significant deviation from the major stream of Greek thought. He has Mary exclaim powerful words against the mighty. He may have put those words into Mary's mouth, something most ancient historians, such as Thucydides and Livy, did. No one thought this dishonest or at variance with the truth as long as it was compatible with the person. Cicero's statement could be regarded as representative: "We concede to rhetoricians the privilege of distorting history to produce a more effective narrative." Jewish history provides precedents for Mary's exclamation, for instance Miriam and Hannah, but Mary's political statement was highly unusual for the ancient world, certainly for someone of such low status. Jesus' treatment of women confirmed the new status. He healed them, talked to them, befriended them and cared deeply about them. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman he broke the barrier of nationalism and the stigma of the outcast. Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. The new status announces the breaking in of God's kingdom.

Acts-Paul's letters

The early church broke immediately with the synagogue tradition. For instance, the disciples were constantly praying "along with the women" (Acts 1:14) and these women participated in the election of Matthias, Judas' replacement. Women led household churches, as Peter's rescue story indicates, and is apparent from Prisca in Rome and Ephesus and Nympha in Laodicea. The story of Tabitha-Dorcas (Acts 12) provides another break with Jewish tradition. Rather than being a model of impurity, she is a moral model. Women were held responsible for their faith, for Saul dragged women in Judea and Samaria into prison and wanted to do the same in Damascus (Acts 8:3; 9:2).

Women played a significant role in the spreading of the gospel. Paul's first convert in Europe was a woman, Lydia of Philippi. Possibly a freedwoman from Thyatira, she may have been a Jewish proselyte. Dealing in purple cloth she could be classified as a dealer in luxury goods. It was *her* household, not that of a possible husband, that was converted with her. This suggests that she had some independent authority, closer akin to Spartan than to Jewish or Athenian women. Immediately following her baptism she invited Paul and Silas to stay at her house, characteristic of the hospitality practised by early Christians.

History books often portray early Christians as coming from the lower classes, but this appears somewhat misleading. Lydia probably was wealthy and she was not alone. In Thessalonica Paul and Silas persuaded "a large number of god-fearing Greeks, and not a few *prominent women*" and they did the same in Berea (Acts 17:4, 12). This prominence coheres with the fact that women in Macedonia were more emancipated than in many other parts of the Roman Empire.

In Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Prisca/Priscilla, who, with other Jews, were expelled from Rome after Emperor Claudius' edict of AD 49, perhaps the result of disturbances between Christians and Jews. Possibly the couple were already Christian before they met Paul. When Paul sailed for Syria, they accompanied him as far as Ephesus. There they met the learned and influential Jew Apollos, who taught accurately about Jesus but apparently only knew John's baptism. After inviting him to their house, Priscilla and Aquila "explained to him the way of God more accurately." With their names in reversed order, there can be little doubt that Priscilla taught him. The reversed order may indicate that she was a Roman lady of higher rank than her husband. Their house became a meeting place for a congregation, as was the case later in Rome. In the letter to the Romans Paul calls them "fellow workers" to whom "all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful" (16:3).

In his letters Paul mentions numerous women who apparently were not subordinate to men. That brings us to the role of women in the church. Some of them functioned as teachers, to women as well as men. According to Titus 2:3-4, older women (*presbutidas*) were expected to teach the younger ones "what is good," which certainly included spiritual matters. The Greek term is related to *presbuteroi*, the ruling and teaching elders with pastoral visitation duties. As the story of Prisca indicates, some women also taught men. This was unusual in the ancient world, although not unheard of.

Women also prophesied. Following Old Testament precedents, Elizabeth, Mary and Anna prophesied. According to Joel 2:28 and cited in Acts 2: 17, daughters would prophesy. The four unmarried daughters of the evangelist Philip, one of the seven deacons then living at Caesarea, did so (Acts 21:9). It seems unlikely that their prophesying refers to the general characteristic that every Christian is a prophet. Theirs could be a spontaneous-charismatic act. Not only did Paul urge every Christian in Corinth to desire especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14: 1).), but also gave instructions to women who had this gift (11:5). As an incident Paul experienced in Ephesus makes clear, such prophesying could be very spontaneous. Some recently baptized Christians, after receiving the Holy Spirit, "spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). It is also possible that theirs was an act of teaching. In 1 Cor.12:28 prophets are ranked between apostles and teachers, suggesting that prophets also have a teaching ministry. There seems to be no good reason why this ministry should not be applied to Philip's daughters. For about two centuries women practised this gift of prophesy. However, since it was difficult to control the church gradually began to distance itself from it, especially after prophesying women in heretical sects began to take leading roles.

There were also deaconesses in the early church. To the church at Rome Paul recommended "our sister Phoebe, a *diakonon* of the church in Cenchreae," perhaps the bearer of the letter, since Cenchreae was the eastward port of Corinth. Many English translations have "servant" rather than "deaconess," but this may be due to doctrinal presuppositions, for elsewhere the word is translated as "deacon." While evidence is limited, there is enough to indicate that the early church employed deaconesses. There exists an epitaph of a certain Sophia which reads in part "the deaconess, the second Phoebe." In third century Eastern ecclesiastical typology the bishop was said to be in the image of God, the deacon, of Christ, and the deaconess, of the Holy Spirit. Deaconesses continued to play a role in the Eastern churches until the turn of the twelfth century, but in the West already the Council of Orange of 441 prohibited diaconal duties for women.

It seems reasonably clear that women played a significant role in the early church. Gradually fear of heresy, the pre-occupation with virginity and monasticism, and male clerics resentment of women encroaching on their "private preserve," closed the door to women's active involvement in conversion and institutional roles. The new status of women reflecting the breaking in of God's kingdom reverted to reflecting the various kingdoms of men.

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How should the church respond to homosexuality?

Brian Kliewer

The sexual revolution has changed our world. It has especially changed the view of homosexuality, offering two divergent views. It is either seen as blatant sin or as a God-created lifestyle to be celebrated.

How, then, shall the church respond?

We can learn a great deal from the Bible and, especially, from Jesus' ministry. There are many parallels between the city of Corinth and our situation today. Corinth was near the intellectual city of Athens. Corinthians took pride in their intellectual pursuits. Corinth was a large, wealthy port city, and the people enjoyed luxury and comfort. Corinth was known for its wild party life and sexual freedom. The phrase "live like a Corinthian" was understood to mean drunken, promiscuous living. Corinth was part of the Roman Empire which considered religious tolerance a great virtue. They detested Christianity's claim that Jesus was the only way to God.

Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to plant seeds and water them.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building" (I Cor. 3:6-9).

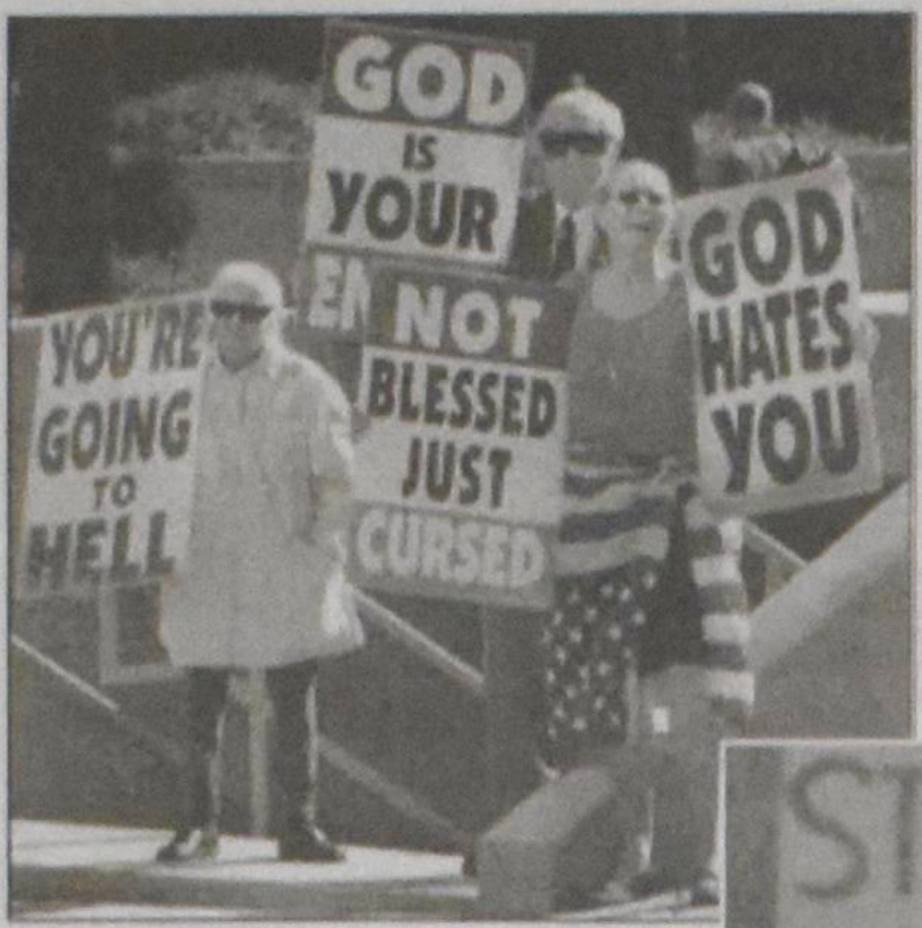
Paul uses the imagery of a farmer to say that the church's job is to spread the good news of the Gospel and create a healthy church community where people come to faith and then grow up in faith. Interestingly, Paul also clarifies something about the church's job: the church's job is not to make people change or grow. That's God's job.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

What did Paul mean by planting seeds? What does it mean to spread the good news of the Gospel to the people of Corinth? Was it to include those involved in homosexuality?

Paul did not tell the Corinthian church to protest, march or cry out against homosexuality or any of the other sins of the people. Why not? Perhaps it is because Jesus said that "He did not come into the world to condemn the world but to save it." (John 3:17) There is no scriptural reference anywhere where the church is told to engage in protests, confrontations or petitions.

Sometimes today's church seems to use Jonah as an example of spreading the Gospel to people involved in homosexuality. "In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed" (Jonah 3:3). That is all Jonah said: "You are going to die." He did not speak about repentance, forgiveness, God's grace or God's power to produce deep and lasting change. In fact, he got angry when the people of Nineveh repented and God forgave them.



Homosexuals continue to face discrimination even by those who call themselves Christians.

Sometimes today's church says, "Homosexuals are bad people – the worst sinners – and God is going to destroy them." Often the church is as angry as Jonah and does not want to see people reclaimed from homosexuality and coming to their church.

Jesus responded differently than Jonah. He did not condemn the prostitute who poured perfume on his feet, the woman caught in adultery or the woman at the well. He did not shame them for their lifestyles. Jesus became their friend. He forgave their sins and sought to reclaim them for his kingdom. The church, likewise, is to seek those who are lost, become their friends, visit their homes, eat with them and tell them that Jesus Christ offers them living water.

Belong, believe, become

We can use three words to guide how the church shall respond. The church is called to invite people who are affected by homosexuality to Belong, Believe and Become.

Jesus did this with his disciples. Paul's instructions to churches can be summarized in these three words. Missions to unreached people groups follow this strategy. We should reach out to people affected by homosexuality the same way.

When Jesus invited his disciples to follow him, he first invited them to eat with him, travel with him and listen to his teachings. His invitation did not begin with the question, "Who do you think I am?" or the condition that they must believe before they could follow him. He asked that question later. He began by inviting them to follow him, be with him – to belong. He showed them acceptance, affection and approval before he asked them to believe.

All of us have a deep desire to belong. God made us that way. People's need to belong is true across all ages and all cultures. Jesus' approach with his disciples fits the characteristics of today's post-Christian, postmodern societies.

Men and women who are involved in homosexuality don't become interested in Jesus through arguments that homosexuality is wrong. They become interested when we love them and make them feel like they belong.

For the disciples, believing came after belonging. It was after Jesus took his disciples around Galilee Lake, calmed the storm, preached the Sermon on the Mount, fed the 5,000 and walked on water, that he asked the question, "Who do you say I am?"

Can people involved in homosexuality be saved? If someone involved in homosexuality asks me, "What must I do to be saved?,"

the answer is the same as for everyone else. We need to understand our need for a Saviour, believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead, accept that salvation is God's gift to us and that we accept it with gratitude and confess that Jesus is our Lord. Becoming a Christian does not require that we first clean up our lives. That happens later.

Jesus did not tell the Samaritan woman at the well that she needed to clean up her life before he could offer her living water. Cleaning up our lives, finding victory over sin, learning how to resist temptation and how to put on the full armour of God all come after we become Christians.

After we become Christians and God washes us, we begin the process of becoming who God designed us to be. This is called transformation. The Bible says that everyone must undergo deep and lasting changes to become the people God designed us to become.

Drinking muddy water

How do we help people become what God intends them to be? Simply telling people, "The Bible says it's wrong, so stop sinning" is not helpful. Consider what Jesus does with the woman at the well. He puts first things first. He begins by asking her to meet a need in his life – he asks her for a drink. We should not avoid homosexual men and women but seek them out. Go where they are and ask them for a coffee. Ask them to help you by providing something you need.

Jesus first talks to the woman about her ongoing need for water; then he moves to her spiritual need. Jesus knows how thirsty for love this woman must have been for her to get married five times and then to live common law. To tell her to stop trying to find a man to satisfy her need for love before giving her a significant substitute simply won't work.

So Jesus offers her eternal water.

When she says she is interested in what he has to offer, he brings up her lifestyle. Instead of condemning her, he simply tells her that he knows all about her life. He doesn't tell her to stop sinning; he simply acknowledges her real condition. She changes the subject, probably because it is painful or embarrassing. And he allows her to shift away from the pain of her need. Then he brings her back to the real issue – which is not her sexual sin but putting God first, heart and soul, in spirit and truth – authentic worship. Jesus knew that until she had living water springing up in her soul, flowing out of a right relationship with God that she would forever drink from muddy water.

If we try to force people to clean up their lifestyles before they experience the source of life-giving water, then we spiritually dehydrate them. After they have experienced this life-affirming gift Jesus offers, people will discover that God leads them through deep and lasting change. That's the Become part of Belong, Believe, Become.

God want us to become Christ-like. People involved in homosexuality become Christ-like in the same way that everyone else does. There is no special process for homosexuality. God has a part in the process, we as individuals have a part, and the church has a part.

The change process that God uses is not a formula. There are common elements such as recovery from the hurtful things of the past, developing stronger relationships in a family and community, building a new sense of identity and support system. God tailors the timeline and sequence to fit the person. Most importantly, God leads the process of change. Change happens when we follow God.

The church's role is one of encouragement and friendship when it comes to homosexuality. People need to be encouraged that change, becoming Christ-like is possible. They need to be encouraged to make use of the help that a good counsellor can provide or to become part of a support group.

Each of us needs to encourage one another to follow God as he leads us to become the person he designed us to be. We need to encourage people to "press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of you. Press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus."

What happens when a church reaches out to people involved in homosexuality, inviting them to Belong, Believe and Become? Miracles happen. Broken people receive hope and healing. Deep and lasting change happens as people submit themselves to the lordship of Jesus. People become what God intended them to be.

Brian Kliewer is the Executive Director of the Exodus Global Alliance.

Features

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links. *Christian Courier* gives you a glimpse into current Reformed thinking by presenting excerpts from some of today's top blogs. Blogs are usually free-association, occasional, off-the-cuff and may not conform to the standards of print publications.

LEXVIEW

from http://www.cardus.ca/lexview/article/2201/#Religion
This issue of LexView *was researched and written by:* ***Kevin L. Boonstra****, B.A. (Hons.), LL.B., of the British Columbia Bar.* LexView *is a project brought to you by the Cardus Centre for Cultural Renewal, a not-for-profit agency.* LexView *is made possible through the donations of foundations, corporations and individuals. To inquire about making your contribution, please contact Cardus.*

Kevin L. Boonstra

In *Trinity Western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers* Justices Iacobucci and Bastarache wisely noted that "[t]he diversity of Canadian society is partly reflected in the multiple religious organizations that mark the societal landscape and this diversity of views should be respected." That case dealt with religiously based lifestyle restrictions and whether accreditation of a teacher education program could be denied based on a prohibition of homosexual behaviour. The Court acknowledged the potential for discriminatory impact of such documents, but also reminded us that equality rights are not to be so broadly applied as to eclipse the rights of others.

Allowing Religion to Engage with Society

Christian Horizons deals with a similar document, but more directly in applying human rights laws. The considerations of the Court were necessitated by the wording of the statute, but the admonition of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Trinity Western* is nevertheless apropos.

As in *Trinity Western*, the *Christian Horizons* case concerns the self-definition and activities of a religious community. The Court rightly pushed back the Human Rights Tribunal's decision, which would have allowed unjustified legislative intrusion into how religious communities define themselves.

The Tribunal would have narrowly construed the question of whether Christian Horizons was "primarily engaged in serving the interests of persons identified by their . . . creed". By focusing narrowly on Christian Horizons' activities in serving the disabled, the Tribunal eschewed any real attempt to understand its religious mission.

As recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* the essence of religion includes practices that allow "individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith". Freedom of religion in s.2(a) of the *Charter* protects religious practices and religiously motivated actions. In addition to departing from the precedent in *Parks*, the Tribunal's analysis of the purposes of Christian Horizons and the communities it served wrongly constricted the protection of religious groups in s.24(1)(a) of the *Human Rights Code*.

The Court corrected the Tribunal's error by recognizing that, at its essence, Christian Horizons directly served Evangelical Christians by providing them an outlet for the Christian service impulse so directly connected with their faith. In doing so, it brought the balance of human rights closer to an acceptable equilibrium.

The Court's acknowledgment of the religious nature of Christian Horizons allows religious organizations to define themselves and their own mission, consistent with the tenets of their faith. An impoverished concept of equality and freedom of religion would only allow religious groups to do so within the private confines of home, church, temple and mosque.

Recognizing that public engagement and service to the broader community is often intertwined with religious practice allows both stronger diversity in society and a more balanced view of the secular state. In order for Canadian society to be secular, it need not be immunized from religion or the public influence of religion. It must welcome the interaction of both religious and non-religious; worldly and sacred.

In more formal terms, the Court followed prior Supreme Court of Canada decisions rejecting the argument that provisions such as s.24(1)(a) were "rights limiting" provisions, as opposed to ones that confer and recognize religious rights and freedoms. In doing so, the Court reinforced that human rights provisions will be read to incorporate freedom of religion and freedom of association. Had it not done so, the ability of many organizations that serve the public to maintain their religious character would be rendered almost impossible. Without this level of recognition, religious groups would be faced with the alternative of abandoning their religious foundation or removing themselves from public service. Both options push religious communities to the sidelines of our society, rendering them powerless to help anyone but their own members.

Chipping Away at Associational Rights for Religious Communities

Unfortunately, the Court did not push back the application of human rights limitations on religious groups far enough. As a necessary part of determining whether s.24(1)(a) applied to protect the right of Christian Horizons to impose a homosexual relationship restriction on it employees, the Court was required to determine if the lifestyle statement is a BFOQ. This analysis requires a determination – at a functional level – of whether the requirement is objectively necessary.

The Court focused in on the particular restriction, homosexual relationships, and whether there was a connection between it and employment as a support worker. The Court did not question the finding that Christian Horizons subjectively believed, on religious grounds, that the restriction was necessary.

In considering the dichotomy between the subjective and objective elements of the BFOQ test, one is reminded of the constitutional distinction between assessing the sincerity of religious beliefs and assessing their validity. In considering freedom of religion claims, the Supreme Court of Canada has been clear that courts in Canada are only permitted to consider whether religious beliefs are sincerely held, not whether they are good or valid. In conducting an objective assessment of whether Christian Horizons needed to impose specific elements of the lifestyle restriction on Ms. Heintz, the Court allowed itself to delve too deeply into the specific tenets of the Evangelical Christianity espoused by the Christian Horizons community.Other human rights cases have also pushed the boundaries of protecting against state assessment of the validity of religious belief. In *Smith and Chymyshyn* v. *Knights of Columbus* and prior cases, courts and human rights tribunals have focused on whether strictly enforcing anti-discrimination provision would conflict with "core" religious beliefs. In conducting this analysis, they must determine the nature of specific tenets of faith and how essential they are to the religion as a whole.

Human rights legislation has generally been found to be constitutional in Canada. If a provision is under-inclusive or otherwise fails to accord with the *Charter*, courts have shown a willingness to interfere with human rights statutes. At a minimum, the provisions in human rights legislation must be applied in a manner that recognizes and is consistent with the guarantees of the *Charter*, including freedom of religion and freedom of association.

The objective part of the BFOQ analysis in this context inherently involves an assessment of how important specific religious conduct standards are to the work done by and in an admittedly religious community. It is not enough under human rights precedents to establish a sincere belief that those working as part of the religious mission share beliefs and live in accordance with them in order to continue as a member of the community. The courts also require that each specific behavioural requirement be justified against the particular work tasks being performed. This chips away at the associational rights of the organization and its ability to define itself based on sincerely held religious beliefs.

While common in human rights cases, the nature of this inquiry is contrary to the principles underlying Canadian freedom of religion enunciated so eloquently in *Amselem*. In conducting a narrow objective analysis, the Court placed Christian Horizons' freedom of religion and freedom of association on a precipice, the fate of which was to be determined on the *Court's view* of whether a practicing homosexual could functionally do the job of a support worker.

The question ought to be whether it is objectively legitimate for an organization to impose Christian lifestyle standards and whether they are believed to be sincerely necessary by the organization. Analyzing each specific lifestyle standard against particular job functions places the court in the position of assessing the validity of religiously motivated requirements. It allows the state to second guess theological choices of religious groups.

After accepting the legitimacy of Christian Horizons serving its own Christian community in providing support services to the public, the objective portion of the BFOQ analysis should have been undertaken in a manner deferential to its religious precepts, which would be consistent with the values underlying s.2(a) of the *Charter*. In simple terms, religious communities must be permitted to define their own foundational religious tenets, and then require buy-in from its members, as evidenced by their lifestyle choices. Doing otherwise allows state intrusion into determining the validity of religious belief and practice and jeopardizes true religious liberty.

Columns

Patchwork Words

Melissa Kuipers

Okay alone

I'm a fairly extroverted person. In high school I filled my life with every activity I could fit into my schedule from church, youth group and school. When I moved into a dorm in university and realized I would be constantly surrounded by people, I felt life was at its best. So I've found it a bit of a transition over the years to push myself to attend events or activities when I can't find someone else to accompany me. What will people think of me if I'm by myself? Will they think there's something wrong with me? Will I enjoy it by myself? Will I feel lonely?

Aloneness vs. loneliness

I'd like to differentiate between what I think it means to be alone and to be lonely. It's so easy to be isolated in our world, and to do this without really giving ourselves space to be alone. Free time quickly fills up with headphones, Facebook, TV, and other minor addictions which apply weak emotional salve to our sense of loneliness. Aloneness, on the other hand, is the sense of being comfortable with one's own thoughts and being willing to do things one enjoys by oneself, to give the mind time to daydream or to process experiences and emotions.

Madeleine L'Engle dwells on this idea in her book *Walking on Water*, in which she speaks of the importance of taking "*be*ing time" – time to be fully present in a moment we enjoy, to meditate, we might say, to enjoy the experience of celebrating a sense of Sabbath rest. "I've . . . stopped feeling guilty about taking *be*ing time," L'Engle writes. "It's something we all need for our spiritual health, and often we don't take enough of it."

Reasons for avoidance

I asked some of my students to write about their experience with *be*ing time, but many of the teenagers couldn't grasp the concept, maybe because we give so little priority to this sentiment in our fast-paced culture. One very honest young man in the class wrote that, while he knew *be*ing time was important, he was purposeful about never *be*ing alone with his thoughts because then he knew he'd have to deal with the important issues in life.

Maybe this is part of why we fear being alone. We're afraid of conviction. We're afraid of what we might find out about ourselves. We're afraid of facing our pain. We're afraid of being lonely.

Learning to love being alone

I recently watched a beautiful online video by filmmaker Andrea Dorfman and East Coast artist Tanya Davis called "How to Be Alone" (you can find it on YouTube). Davis narrates her poem with advice on how to get comfortable doing things alone.

"If at first you are lonely," she says, drawing a distinction between being isolated and good healthy doses of solitude, "be patient. If you've not been alone much, or if when you were, you weren't okay with it, then just wait. You'll find it's fine to be alone once you're embracing it."

She encourages listeners to "start simple" – going for walks in nature, praying in a place of worship, taking a book to a coffee shop. Then gradually get a little more adventurous – go to a show, dress up and go out for dinner, go dancing, find your own little corner and put into practice the adage "Dance as if no one is watching" because, as she says, "they're probably not."

I've tried to challenge myself to do things I enjoy on my own a little more this past year – nothing huge, but little things. I volunteer at concerts with World Vision, attend poetry readings at the library, and attend social events where I don't know a lot of people. I've always been pleasantly surprised at how many other people go alone to such activities, and this has given me great opportunities to meet people outside of my regular spheres in terms of age group, profession, and faith group. It's made me more confident, more sure of who I have been created to be and reminds me that ultimately I am never alone. And it is in that assurance of God's faithful presence that I can experience life to the fullest, even when no one else is around.

Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) is a full-time student completing my Masters of Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Toronto.

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

'God's time is the very best time'

Last month I wrote about death and the martyrdom that God has in store for some of his saints before Christ returns. I'm thinking about death again. I'll tell you why.

A few days after I wrote that column a fellow singer and committee member with me in the Niagara Region's symphony chorus died suddenly, shocking us all. I had just talked with his wife, also a chorus member, about the wonderful summer they had spent in Europe.

That very same day my husband and I had the sadly inevitable task of asking the vet to euthanize one of our cats because of cancer. The two deaths are not remotely alike, but losing a loved pet still stings.

During that time I had also been reading the seminal biography of Johann Sebastian Bach by Christoph Wolff. The book marked the 250th anniversary of Bach's death in 2000 but its contents breathe splendid life into the man, his music and his faith. Classical music lovers know that Bach's astounding musical gifts laid the foundation for all Western music thereafter, and his effect is still reverberating. Christians recognize Bach as a man of deep faith, and as a biblically insightful amateur theologian.

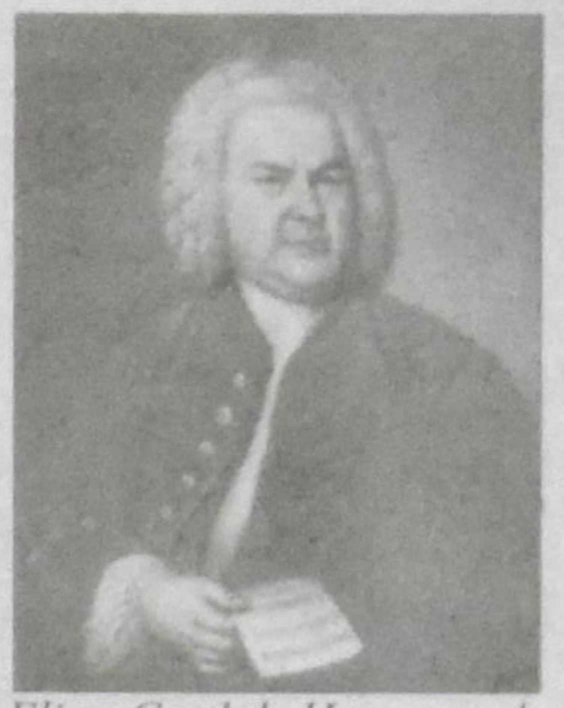
But why am I bringing up Bach in the context of death? Because Wolff's biography reveals what a bitterly frequent visitor death was to Bach – and how he reacted. Many people in the 17th and 18th centuries who managed to survive childhood did live to 65, 75 or more, but "simple" infection and disease, by our standards, often wielded swift and early death.

Sorrow upon sorrow

This is hard to imagine, but consider: You have a spouse with whom you had seven children. The third of those children died after only 20 days of life; the fourth and fifth, twins, died shortly after birth; the seventh died at ten and a half months. That was the anguish Bach and his wife Maria Barbara were visited with while still young parents in their 20s and early 30s.

Now try to imagine that while you were away for six weeks at the behest of your princely employer, the beloved spouse you left at home alive and well with your surviving children was dead and buried when you returned. No courier, no letter, no telephone could intercept you to tell you of the illness, much less the death. That was the new emotional battering ram that pummelled Bach when Maria Barbara died, cause unknown, at age 36 in their 13th year of marriage.

Bach remarried a year later. Both marriages were happy, but his new wife, Anna Magdalena, was herself a musician and a true soul mate. The cycle of new life and early death started all over again. They had 13 children together. The first died at age three, the third child also at age three. Their fifth child lived just three days, the next to age five, the one after that five days, and the next one only five months. Their tenth child, Bach's 17th, lived just two days. Nine of Bach's 20 children lived into adulthood, and only six lived past age 50.



Elias Gottlob Hausmann's portrait of Bach, 1746.

An added sorrow came in the form of a recalcitrant son, Johann Gottfried Bernhard, whose irresponsibility and excessive drinking lost him jobs, sunk him into poverty and caused his death at age 24.

'Turn not your gracious face from me'

How does a person handle such sorrow upon sorrow, trauma upon tragedy and remain "normal"? We should not think, as some have said, that because life then was short and often brutal people just "got used to" death – though, to be sure, they were sturdier people emotionally than we moderns tend to be. The real answer is stout-hearted, deep-seated faith, and the unshakable belief that God controls life and death, and in his wisdom both gives it and takes it. The opening phrase of Bach's funeral cantata BWV106 expresses it: "God's time is the very best time" ("Gottes Zeit ist der allerbeste Zeit").

In Bernhard's case we explicitly see his father's faith in action. Bach had helped Bernhard get two good organist positions and he paid his son's debts. "What shall I do or say further?" he wrote to a friend. "Since no admonition or even any loving care and assistance will suffice any more, I must bear my cross in patience and leave my unruly son to God's Mercy alone, doubting not that He will hear my sorrowful pleading and in the end will so work upon him, according to his Holy Will, that he will learn to acknowledge that the lesson is owing wholly and alone to Divine Goodness."

In July 1750 when Bach, blind and incapacitated by a stroke, realized that his own end was near he asked another friend to play for him the chorale "Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit." The English text says *Before your throne I now appear, O God and bid you humbly, turn not your gracious face from me, a poor sinner. Confer on me a blessed end, on the last day awaken me Lord, that I may see you eternally. Amen, amen, hear me.*

May each of us, too, be able to pray that prayer at our last hour, whenever God may send it.

Marian Van Til (mvantil@roadrunner.com) is a former CC editor living in Youngstown, NY.

Columns

Getting Unstuck Arlene Van Hove

Should Grandma do daycare?

Some social theorists believe our society is changing too quickly, not giving ourselves enough time to develop insights or skills needed to deal with the demands of our contemporary times. This is most obvious in the changing structure and roles of the family. In many young families, both father and mother work full time for various reasons, which leaves the care of young children an ongoing dilemma.

Question: I am a 24-yr-old teacher on maternity leave with our first child. Next year I hope to go back to teaching full time. Because these are formative years for children, I am thinking of asking my mother to take care of our daughter while my spouse and I work. Unfortunately, this may complicate my mother's life. She is an empty nester and working full time. I know my request sounds presumptuous, but if I can continue working it means a more secure financial foundation for our young family. Some couples postpone parenting until their early or mid-thirties in order to be more financially settled, but we chose to start our family early. I would like to be a full-time homemaker after having another child in three or four years, but for now I feel the need to work.

Answer: I am glad you are giving yourself time to dialogue about this issue. I also commend you for your enthusiasm to provide a stable foundation for your family. Still, you are definitely asking a lot of your mother. A generation or two ago needing parental help in this area would be a done deal. Now, however, your request might open a Pandora's box that could leave a bad taste in both of your mouths. Consequently, there are a few things you may want to think about before approaching your mother. For instance, has your mother at any time suggested she would be available to care for your child should you wish to go back to work? Has she indicated she would be willing to make changes in her life because of her role as a grandmother? Furthermore, has she given you an inkling of what her goals and hopes are for this stage in her life? I fully understand life is expensive for young families and to have a solid foundation in this area sounds like a good idea. Many grandmothers thrive taking care of their grandchildren, whether through "need" or "choice." And so, it may be time for you to get to know your mother in a way that will intuitively tell you whether caring for your child will be something she would love to do. In the meantime, I wish you joy during your maternity leave and hope you will find a helpful arrangement for your child next year.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

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Words from Wild Horses Kenny Warkentin

Bullying, scars and suicide: stopping the cycle

Recently the news has once again been saturated with stories of bullying and teen suicides. When these are made public, we see a flurry of comments and statements and then things get quiet, and we wait for another episode of media action. I am in no way downplaying the sincere heartbreak that each of these recent suicides mean to the youth's parents, family and friends. Each one has included some form of gay-inferred bullying. I know all too well the horror and lifelong scars that bullying can leave.

It began in Grade 6 for me. I took the babysitting course and was one of the only guys in the group. I was also a piano player; I loved art and music. I was notably different than the other guys in my class. I was sensitive and introspective; actually, I was insecure and shy, for I had a secret no one could know. You see, I was attracted to guys, and I lived in a primarily secular small hockey town that just didn't measure up in the late 70's. The separation between my male peers and myself started subtly and quietly. Small jeers made toward me, a push, a shove, and I became invisible.

Entering into grade 7, a tidal wave of hate began between the bullies and me. The words faggot, fairy, sissy, and queer became very familiar; I heard them in the school halls, classrooms, guys' locker room and on the streets of my small town. I couldn't escape. Being pushed in the halls, made to feel like an outsider, an alien that didn't belong. My biggest dream was to escape, to find some release to the pain and torment I experienced every day.

Searching for a way out

I found my comfort in music, art and reading. I began to fantasize what it would be like to live somewhere else, be someone else, and I began to dream that it would actually happen. I also knew that God existed, even though I had a very limited understanding of him as Papa God, and I knew Jesus, but knew little of who he was as my brother. I prayed to him daily. I pleaded and cried out for some form of help. Then I waited and waited.

Fast forward to my Grade 11 year: a young man with rage under the surface, a victim of abuse, emotionally weary of facing it in silence. I had told my parents I was too sick to go to school and I waited for them to leave the house. Empty, I went into the basement bathroom and stood facing the vanity mirror, my tear ducts empty, unable to show the pain I felt deep within my body. I turned the water on. The sharp razor blade held tight by my fingers, I tried to gain the courage to make the first cut. Nothing. I couldn't move. I was frozen in place and as the mirror steamed up, the thought that ending my life would only send me further into hell caught my attention. I slowly turned the water off and threw the razor in the garbage and crumbled to the floor in sheer exhaustion.

That day, I made a decision – because of my faith in God – that I wouldn't take my life. Even though the bullying continued well into my young adult life, I continued to press on. My life didn't get any easier, but my coping mechanisms became more heightened. I began to turn to other things to ease my pain, such as shopping, entertainment, masturbation, pornography. I needed to feel good. Little did I know that these things would grow and fester in my life and soon become huge walls that kept others out.

Vivid reminders

Fast forward to 2010: a middle-aged man who has reconciled the rage, having released it at the cross of Jesus, and who is now known to him as closer than a brother and to a Papa God who is inclining his ear to hear this man all the time. I still carry the scars of bullying, however. They still burn, itch, and tingle when something reminds me of what I experienced. Youth who experience any form of bullying bring me back and I can easily get enraged, angry, but more so it breaks my heart that this still happens in 2010. I don't want the media to recycle a flurry of comments about how things should change. I don't want society to lump all "Christians" together, stating that our values bring about homophobia and hatred. Instead, I'd love society to see us standing up for injustice regardless of how someone has decided to live. No one deserves to be bullied, ever. Period! No matter how or why they are being bullied. It is never okay.

I hope one day that my scars have no reason to remind me of what I experienced as a youth. I hope for a bright and better day tomorrow, for each person our God has created.

Kenny Warkentin (kenny@livingwaterscanada.org) is an avid blogger, thinker and artist.

Glory in Thunder

Who can try me now?

Even far a-width
Where clerks and rex choke on checks
And spotted spit the pits
Past far-sweeping sleeps of the sheep-counting deep
I am golden
To leave my beholden to steep in the scape of the steeple chase

My limit-pressed limbs are him-less hymns
In openess grim of their gropingless hoping
But in for the test
Unpinned for the token
Lest they be pressed to the unbroken breast
And left in their probing unblest

My heart I confess is the craven
That part to be praised is debased to behave
And the hardest to brave in the ring
O, Cloven and King
It is closest to bring me to ease for my craving
To stave off the haven
And rave of the harm of the thing

But You, Father
Factor and force
You were the frown on the face to my front
You were the core and the course
You were the care of my falcon-flown corpse
And the cure of the feller feathers it courts –
Fly-blown and foul
Fulsome and coarse

You who can try me
You alone
Who culls the bread and breadth I have bled
The bulbing of blood on my palms you have read
Your call, your kill
I will your will
And kiss my hand at the billows shed

Brett Alan Dewing

No longer alone: why friendships matter in ministry

Rachel Boehm

Here's a riddle for you. What is surrounded on all sides, but still stands painfully alone? The answer: the clergy. Surrounded by parishioners, their calendars crowded with hospital visits and meetings and church events, many pastors find themselves standing in a desperately lonely place. "There is a fair amount of loneliness in this job even though you are surrounded by people," says Rev. Don Orange, pastor of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Greeley, Colorado. "The loneliness is not that you don't have friends. But with many of your friends, it is not appropriate to talk about your work as a pastor."

That loneliness caught up with Rev. John Terpstra, pastor of Immanuel CRC in Fort Collins, Colorado. After 25 years in ministry, Terpstra says he began to experience a gnawing emptiness. "It wasn't really burnout. I hadn't lost my sense of calling," Terpstra says. "But I was lonely."

Terpstra had always had many friends, but he realized what he needed was a clergy confidant. "Who could I talk with about some of the difficult situations?" asks Terpstra. As a solo pastor working alone for many years, Terpstra said he felt like the lone ranger mentality had crept up on him. "In the ministry, you are giving a lot, but I wasn't receiving in terms of having another human being who understood me personally and knew my story. I hadn't realized that was important. It is important," Terpstra says. "You need to do ministry in community because there are a lot of demands on you, and you need places to safely say things. There are things you can't share with your spouse or elder group. That is a very normal experience."

"Pastors are no different than anyone else," says Rev. Mark Vermaire, pastor of Crossroads Christian Reformed Church in San Marcos, California. "We were created by God to live in community." Vermaire says he discovered that he needed friends who didn't view him in his pastor role. "We need someone in our lives who accepts us completely, unconditionally, loving us for ourselves and not for our position as pastor."

Barriers to friendship

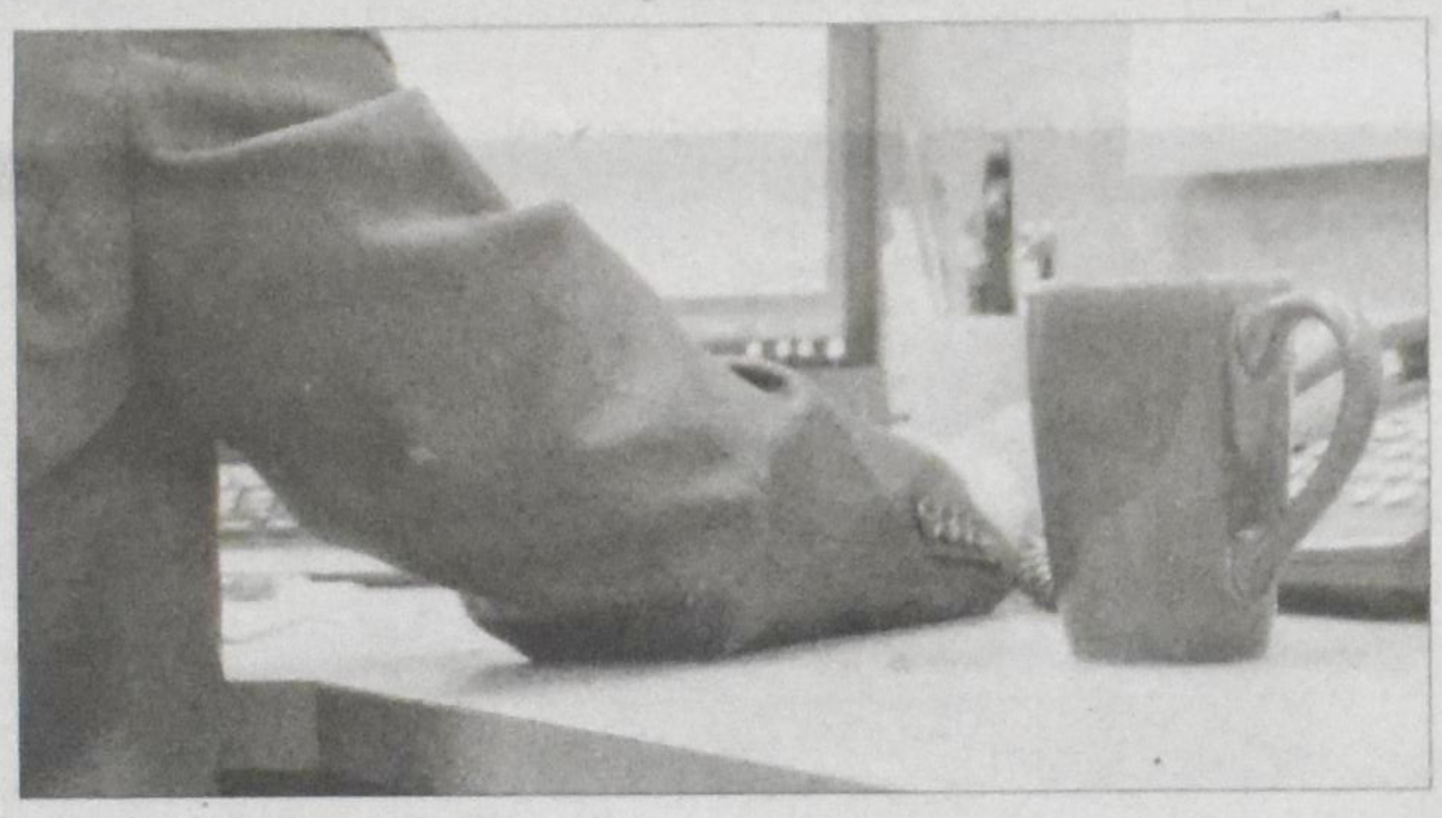
Developing those safe, open and caring relationships can be tough for pastors. Frequent moves can impact the development of close friendships. "Some pastors move several times in their lives so that their friendships always have a shadow of temporariness about them," Vermaire says. Others live in rural areas removed from other pastors.

Yet even pastors who serve on staff teams in larger churches need to be deliberate about developing supportive relationships, says Rev. Tom Bomhof, who co-pastors Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, B.C. Bomhof is part of a team ministry that allows him frequent interaction and sharing with another pastor. Still, Bomhof sought out places to connect more deeply with colleagues in ministry. "As pastors, we don't always know where we can talk and who we can talk things over with," Bomhof says.

It is not that pastors cannot – or should not – have friends in their churches, but sharing in those friendships can be complicated. "In those kinds of friendships, when it comes to the pastor's role, I am your friend but also your pastor," explains Orange. "There are things that I could share with my pastor friends that I could not say to my other friends."

Being afraid to show one's vulnerability can also be a barrier to building healthy relationships as a pastor. "The obstacle for me was that I had to get over that fear," says Terpstra, whose dad was a pastor, too. That childhood experience shaped a perception that pastors need to be strong and bear their burdens alone. "My own father did not share his vulnerabilities with me. He would just keep going, moving through difficult situations." Like his dad, Terpstra tried to go it alone. "I wanted to appear that I had my life under control. I think I had the sense that I was maybe the only one experiencing difficulties, and perhaps I felt I shouldn't have these challenges."

Eventually, though, isolation takes its toll. "Why are there such a large number of pastors who end up leaving the ministry?" asks Terpstra. "Look at the numbers of pastors in their fifties whose lives are imploding. They bail out or go looking for another job. They feel they can't make it in this career for another decade."



In the U.S. alone, it is estimated that 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month. In a recent New York Times article, "Taking a Break from the Lord's Work,"[1] Paul Vitello confirms that being a pastor puts one at risk for physical and mental illness. "The findings have surfaced with ominous regularity over the last few years, and with little notice: Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans," Vitello writes. "In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could."

Vitello cites a recent internal survey by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) in America that found that more than two thirds of ELC pastors reported being overweight, 64 percent had high blood pressure and 13 percent were taking medications for depression. Also cited by Vitello is a 2005 survey of Presbyterian clergy that showed that, compared to three decade ago, four times as many pastors today leave the ministry within their first five years of service.

Peer groups: the antidote for loneliness

At just the time that Terpstra found himself becoming discouraged, he got a call from a colleague who was looking to form a peer group. Terpstra quickly latched on to the idea and helped submit a proposal to the Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program. Terpstra and his peers were successful in getting a grant, and they soon began meeting. "For the first time in my life I had pastoral friendships where I could be encouraged and encourage others," Terpstra says.

What Terpstra discovered in his peer group was that he was not alone. "What we found was that each of us was experiencing profound challenges in our personal lives. We were able to support each other through these. We can all testify that we are all a lot healthier today because we had a place to go with our issues."

Bomhof asserts that the Christian Reformed denomination's willingness to fund peer groups for pastors is crucial in motivating pastors to get involved. "Without the impetus and funding from SPE, I don't know that this would happen as much. Receiving a grant for a peer group shows that there is support from our denomination. It is a real motivator. It creates the expectation that this is what pastors should be doing because it is good for their mental and spiritual health."

Hiding behind the books

In his peer group, Orange says he discovered solace and safety – a place where he could admit to weariness and frustration. "There was a willingness to be open and honest about life and the calling that we are all living out in different but similar ways," Orange says. "Nobody understands the continued pressure of sermon preparation more than other pastors. It's the affinity of our occupation. When you say you are weary, they know what you are talking about."

While Orange advocates strongly for peer groups, he warns that some groups just create more work for pastors. "Ministers often hide behind our books and tasks and turn peer groups into just another meeting. Tasks are OK as a way of getting together, but the real goal of a peer group should be focused on interaction and honesty with each other."

Orange's group purposely did not set out to study a topic or read a particular book. "We focused on just hanging out together and talking about what our lives and ministries were like. Where are your struggles? We wanted to get beyond talking about how many people show up at our churches," Orange says.

With a very loose structure, Orange's group flourished. The relationships nurtured continue now and extended beyond the life of the peer group. "The neat thing about our experience was the tenor of our group. Everybody stepped up to the plate and started sharing."

Make it a priority

Bomhof encourages new pastors to make peer groups a priority early on. "The tyranny of the urgent is always there," he says. "There is all this work to do. Carving out times for relationships can be hard. But I would say, don't ignore this. This is the one thing that you really need to try."

For Terpstra, joining a peer group represented a turning point in his career. "Now I am at a very different place than I was five years ago. I credit learning to do ministry in relationship with others for that," he says.

"I can read a book on my own at home," says Orange. "I can go to a lecture. But what I really want is to know and to be known." Peer groups are the answer. "Isn't that what everyone's heart is crying out for?" Orange asks.

[1] "Taking a Break from the Lord's Work," *The New York Times* (Aug. 1, 2010) by Paul Vitello, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html .

Rachel Boehm is a communications specialist and a freelance writer. She lives near Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Classifieds

Birthdays

With much thankfulness
Our dear Mother, Oma, and Great-Oma

Doreen (Trijn) Lopers

is celebrating her **90th Birthday**
on October 25, 2010

In her honor we would like to invite
her friends and family to a **Open House** Saturday,
October 30th from 2-4 p.m. in the Drayton CRC.
Best Wishes Only.

Home: 8 - 81 Wood St Box 102, Drayton ON N0G 1P0

80th Birthday
on
November 4, 2010

Hilbert Rumph

With thanksgiving
to God for
eighty happy and
healthy years,
we would like
to wish him a very
happy birthday!

With love,
from your wife Diny Rumph (nee Drost)
and all your children and grandchildren:
Alfred & Helen Rumph – Abigail, Anna & Aidan
Jacqueline & Ron Vanderwees – Jared, Michael & Steven
Bernice Hoftyzer – Darryl, Michelle, Krista & Robert
Nancy Rumph
Arnold & Teresa Rumph – Erika, Matthew, Shawna & Joel

Address: Box 4, Drayton ON N0G 1P0

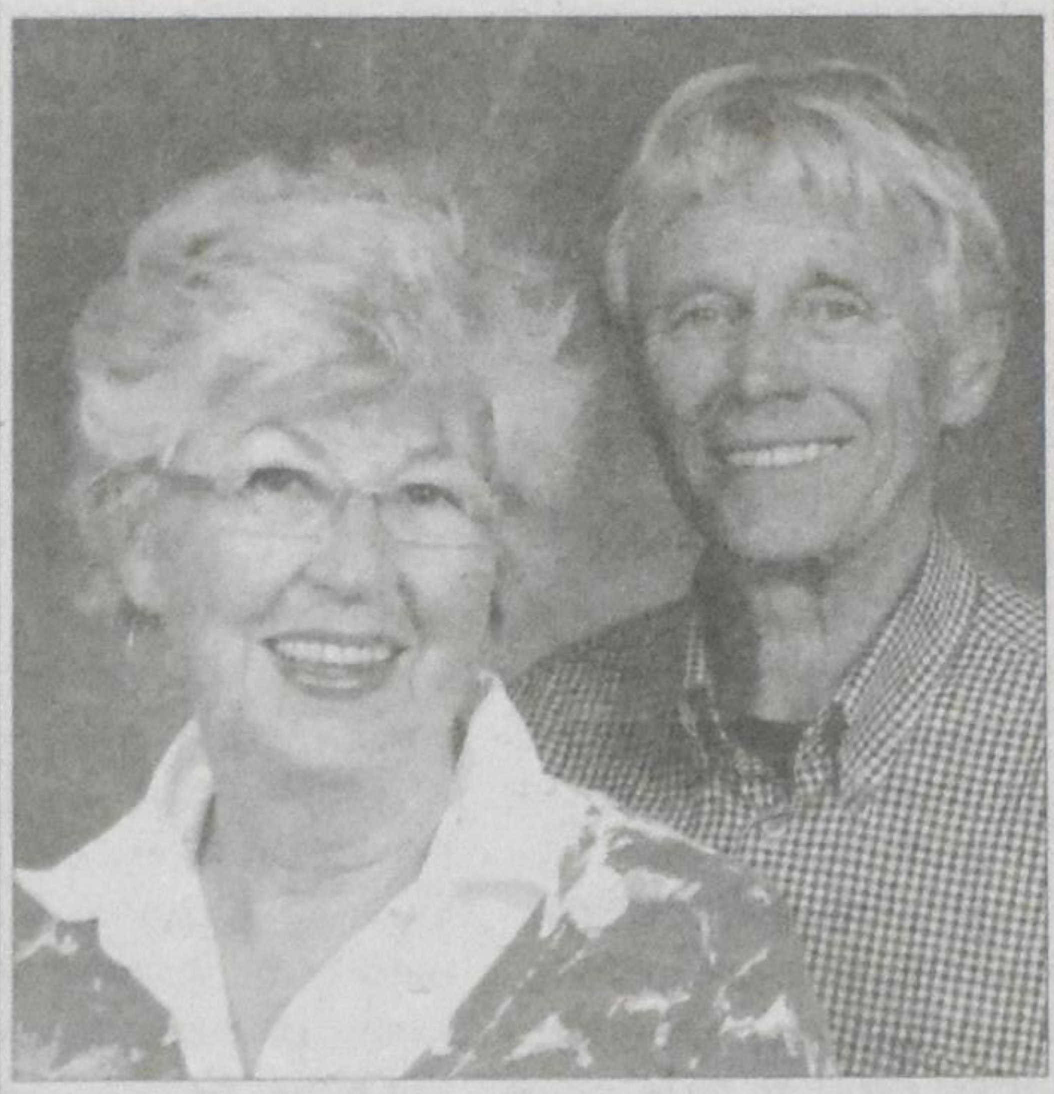
Anniversaries

Henk and Pat (VanderHeide) Getkate

will celebrate their **50th Anniversary**
on November 3, 2010.

Their children Ken & Liana Vos, Walt & Glenda Schaly,
Steve & Trish Eckhoff, and Bill & Johanna Ebbers
with their 12 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild
thank God for his faithfulness.
Congratulations Dad & Mom!

160 Baldwin Street, Brighton ON K0K 1H0
or henkgetkate@gmail.com



November 10
1960-2010
With thankfulness and praise
to God we celebrate with our parents

Sydney Sytsma and Joanne (Joke) Sytsma (nee Struik)

Their **50th Wedding Anniversary**!

With love from your children and grandchildren.
JoAnna & Paul Battjes, *Kamloops, B.C.*
Ben, Philip, Forrest
and
Marty & Ramona Sytsma, *Victoria, B.C.*
Calvin and Sean

Home address: 1183 King Road, King City ON L7B 1K5

Obituaries

Zwartemeer, Netherlands — Bracebridge, Ontario
February 6, 1935 — October 3, 2010

At the appointed time, God called home his child

Janny Mulder

In her 73rd year after a 2 year battle with cancer.
Beloved wife of Koop Mulder for 51 years.
She was predeceased by her beloved son John in 1970.
Mother and friend of Henrietta, Jeanetta & Jack.
Very proud Oma of Luke, Kristen & Ben.

Mom will be remembered for her love of Jesus, her desire to live for him and the love she so freely gave to so many. She handled her illness with grace and lots of humour. For the two years she endured cancer she clung to Psalm 103.

Correspondence: 5 Keall Crescent, Bracebridge ON P1L 1Y4

We mourn the loss on September 29, 2010 of our dearly beloved

Jacobina Wilhelmina Radsma (née Vlaar)

better known as "Bienke" to her friends, "mum" to her 7 children,
"Oma" to her 15 grandchildren and "Nana" to her 18 great-grandchildren.

Born in Andijk Noord Holland in 1922, she immigrated to Canada with her loving husband the late Adam Radsma in 1954. As a foster parent with the Children's Aid Society of St. Catharines, she welcomed dozens of children into her home and her heart. Later she fulfilled a lifelong dream to be a nurse when she took on the responsibilities of a Nursing Aide at Linhaven Home for the Aged in St. Catharines. Bienke was a blessing to many, a witness for her deep Christian faith through all the years and paths of her life.

How precious is your loving kindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men
put their trust under the shadow of your wings.
They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house
and you give them drink from the river of your pleasures.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light. Ps. 36:7-9

Correspondence: Marion Radsma, Unit 605 - 74 Spadina Road, Toronto ON M5R 2T5

1923 - 2010

Evert Aalders

At Soldier's Memorial Hospital in Orillia on
Tuesday afternoon, October 12, 2010 in his 87th year,
Evert passed peacefully into the arms of Jesus.

Beloved husband of the late Rita Aalders (Vanderveen). Loving father of Ralph & his wife Pat, Rika & her husband Bert and Gina & her friend Earl. Fondly remembered by his fifteen grandchildren and his twenty-three great-grandchildren. Evert will be missed by all who knew him.

Visitation was at Coboconk Community Funeral home. A Memorial Service was held at the Lindsay Christian Reformed Church on October 15, 2010. Interment at Lakeview Cemetery Kirkfield, Ontario. As expressions of sympathy donations to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated by the family. www.communityfuneralhomes.com

The Gift of God is eternal life, through Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23

It is with great sorrow that the family of

Rev. Anthony De Jager

announces his passing on Saturday, September 25, 2010
at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ontario.

Anthony was born on June 25, 1922 in Kampen, the Netherlands. As a young man he felt the Lord calling him into the ministry and attended seminary to become a Pastor. Anthony married his beloved wife Janna Roelfina Smid on March 21, 1951 in Nieuw Buinen. Soon after, they immigrated to Canada and were blessed with 59 years of marriage.

Dear father of Henry (Nancy) *Chino, California;* Jack, *Red Deer, AB;* Peter, *Toronto, ON;* Calvin (Wilma), *Bakersfield, California;* Paul (Dorothy) *Bowmanville, ON;* Betty-Ann (Robert Boomsma), *Lindsay, ON;* and Ted (Dionne) *Abbotsford, BC.*

He will truly be missed by his 13 grandchildren and his 10 great-grandchildren.

Anthony was an avid reader and also enjoyed writing. He wrote many articles in various publications such as *De Wachter* and *The Banner.* Under the pen name Arie Dof he wrote a series of immigration stories in the *Calvinist Contact* (*Christian Courier*) about a couple called Arie and Katrien and their experiences in Canada. These articles were compiled into a book and published.

His passing will be sadly felt by the many lives and hearts he has touched in his 60 years as a servant of our Lord in his calling as pastor in the Christian Reformed Churches of Canada and the United States.

Memorial donations can be made to CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Committee) or to the Christian Reformed Church Home Missions. Online condolences can be submitted through Loving Memories www.wardfuneralhome.com

Correspondence: Betty Boomsma, 97 Fieldside Road, Lindsay ON K9V 4R5.

A fond farewell to Anthony De Jager

Bert Witvoet

I was saddened to hear about the passing of Rev. Anthony De Jager. Another outstanding servant of the Lord gone, I thought. I knew him especially from his time in Bowmanville, which was the town I lived and worked in during the 1950s. That was before Tony became the pastor of Rehoboth CRC, but I would meet him or hear him preach when I visited my relatives in Bowmanville. There was another way I used to meet him. Our sister-in-law and her husband had a habit of naming their bull elk after a local CRC pastor. So on their farm I would see "Tony" grazing in the meadows.

The real Tony I also knew from his writings, especially his column in the early immigrant years about Arie and Katrien Dof. They were published anonymously, so few readers knew who this funny and common-sense author really was. The stories were written in Dutch, but some of them were later published in English. Tony's daughter, Betty, says that the English translation does not always catch the flare of the Dutch expressions.

Around the turn of the year 1955, Tony wrote about "oliebollen," a proper subject for Dutch immigrants when they entered a new year. Arie considered himself a gourmet cook when it came to oliebollen. So this New Year's Eve he and Katrien invited their neighbours, the Mols, to come over after church. Wouldn't you know it – the "dominee" also showed up. He used an excuse for dropping in, because his real intent was to taste the famed "oliebollen" that Arie was known for. Arie proudly passed around the bowl filled with delicious oliebollen.

This is how Arie described the event:

"'Go ahead – dig in!' Katrien said at last. And the dominee was the first to bite into one of my golden-brown beauties. His face, however, did not take on the expression of ecstasy that might have been expected. I looked at Mol. He was also chewing as if he had a mouthful of cold mashed potatoes. Katrien arched her eyebrows in the direction of our daughters. There was a short, awkward silence. It was broken by our youngest son. 'Bah!' he cried, eyeing his oliebol as if it were a hand grenade ready to explode in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives."

Something was wrong, wrote the anonymous author of the Arie en Katrien sagas. In fact, the guests soon excused themselves and left. But not before the dominee thanked Katrien for the coffee, putting a lot of emphasis on "the coffee." What had gone wrong? Arie by mistake had baked the second batch in cod-liver oil.

But not all was lost. (Anthony De Jager disliked unhappy endings.) So he wrote that later that evening Arie's family dug into the lower layer of oliebollen that had been fried in normal cooking oil. And so New Year came in with much laughter and hope, especially because Arie read from Psalm 90, which promised that the Lord is our dwelling place throughout all generations.

That is still the case for Anthony De Jager.

Co-owning the Earth

Bert Hielema

Entrusted with creation

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.
Luke 16:10

There are seven billion of us precious people populating this planet. Among these many mouths and brains are far too few who care about the earth, mostly because they are pre-occupied with making ends meet, literally living from land to mouth. Even though many of the churchgoing folk – both Protestant and Roman Catholic – have environmental concerns, their theology pushes them in different directions. They consciously or unwittingly still have that old song in mind: "I am a stranger here within a foreign land, my home is far away upon the Golden strand," meaning heaven, of course, so their heart commitment is elsewhere.

No wonder the politicians exploit this feeling. Take the Republican Party. Its platform proclaims that, because we have god-given rights, we are free to pollute. Its political statement dictates that "claims of human-caused global warming are based on fraudulent, inaccurate information and that legislation and policy based on this information are detrimental to the well-being of the United States." If the Republicans gain power in Congress in the next few weeks, watch out. Goodbye to any measures to do justice to the earth that God created. It's like openly approving vandalism on the Mona Lisa or Rembrandt's "Nacht Wacht."

E.O. Wilson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and world-renowned Harvard biologist, in his recent book *Creation* writes that our destructive power has no limit. "We have, all by our bipedal, wobbly-headed selves, altered Earth's atmosphere and climate away from the norm. . . .We have spread toxic chemicals worldwide, appropriated 40 percent of the solar energy available for photosynthesis, converted almost all of the easily arable land, dammed rivers, raised the planets sea level and are close to running out of fresh water."

With a growing world population, and more people wanting a Western diet, there is constantly a greater need for new agricultural land. It will come by converting more rain forests and savannas. In the meantime, warning signs are accumulating. Ten million hectares (25 million acres) of grain monocultures fell victim to drought and fire in Russia this summer, partly because large tracts of peat bogs had been drained. Climate change means that extreme weather events such as droughts and floods may become more frequent in the future. In Pakistan floods overwhelmed 7 million hectares (17 million acres) of agricultural land and a significant portion of the country's infrastructure disappeared under water.

In 2012 the only global deal for limiting greenhouse gas emissions – the Kyoto Protocol – expires. There is no realistic prospect that it will be replaced before it elapses: the existing treaty took five years to negotiate and a further eight years to come into force. In terms of real hopes for global action on climate change, we are now far behind where we were in 1997, or even 1992. It's not just that we have lost 18 precious years. Throughout the age of good intentions and grand announcements we plummeted backwards. In other words, things will only get worse. There'll never be a global climate deal.

I started with quoting Jesus. Each one of us has been entrusted by him to take care of a minute part of his creation. We can't do much, but that does not give us the excuse not to do anything at all. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much," says Jesus, also to us today. This means – since Jesus' ministry has everything to do with the coming of the Kingdom – that when we do our small part to save creation, he will award us with all the treasures of the New Creation, his Kingdom.

Jesus also says in Luke 12:3: "What you have whispered in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roof-tops." This is confirmed in the so-called "butterfly in India paradigm," which indicates that a small event in a complex system can lead to large results. A single butterfly flapping its wings in New Delhi may be the certain cause of a hurricane in North Carolina, though the hurricane may take place a couple of years later.

It's my job to jab – jovially, of course. There are seven billion people in the world of which many are called and few are chosen. The ones that are chosen are those who are faithful in small things, matters which are different from one person to the next. But one rule applies to all: Luke 16 deals with the parable of the Shrewd Manager, and ends with the words, "You cannot serve both God and Money."

And serving God means first of all "serving his creation", as John 3:16 teaches us.

Bert Hielema lives in rural Tweed, where he is a reluctant Presbyterian. He blogs at 'hielema.ca'.

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Committee "Netherlands Bazaar" Christmas Food Parcels

Committee Netherlands Bazaar is depending on your co-operation to successfully identify those families who will receive a Christmas food parcel. If you know of any family of Dutch heritage in Ontario, in extreme financial circumstances, we need to hear from you before Friday, November 12th, 2010.

Please note that we must have specific information in order to send the appropriate food parcel, such as name(s) of recipient(s), address, contact person, ages of children, as well as the reason for aid. Also the telephone number of a contact person who can verify this information and the signature of the contact person are required. All submitted names will be kept in strict confidence. The families who received a parcel last year will not automatically receive one this year. We require confirmation of their current circumstance. If you have questions, please contact: Ge Spaans 905-477-1243, Jannie Thomas 416-498-8706, Dia Pos 905-854-5102 or Henny DeCloe 416-222-1677.

Please forward information by Friday, Nov. 12th, to Mrs. G. Spaans, Committee Netherlands Bazaar", 15 Pavillion Street, Unionville ON L3R 1N8.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 20 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in **Whitby**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.

Oct 23 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at St. George's Anglican Church in **Guelph** We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301

Oct 27 Liberty or Liability - The Future of Institutional Religious Freedom presented by Redeemer University College & Cardus. For more information, please visit www.redeemer.ca/liberty or go.cardus.ca/liberty, or contact Marlene Raddatz at 905.648.2139 x 4414

Oct 29 Pastor Herman Praamsma retirement celebration at Heritage Fellowship CRC, Brampton, ON, For information contact L. van Ginkel at 905-796-3196 or lvanginkel@sympatico.ca See ad Sep. 13 issue.

Nov 5 Christian Festival Concert 7:30 pm, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**. See ad.

Nov 6 Road2Hope Run/walk for WWCS. See ad this issue.

Nov 8 12:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, and the Ottawa Bach Choir (Lisette Canton, Director) present choral and organ works by Bach, Buxtehude, Poulenc, Liszt and others at Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information call 416-872-4255 or visit www.roythomson.com.

Nov. 9 1:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, plays works by Gigout, Handel and Mendelssohn at St. James Cathedral, King & Church Sts., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information, call 416-364-7865.

Nov 18 Annual Church & Charity Seminar hosted by Carters Professioan Corp. from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at Portico Community Church, 1814 Barbertown Rd, **Mississauga**, Ontario. To register, call Toll Free 1-877-942-0001 x230, Fax 519-942-0300, Email seminars@carters.ca or visit website www.carters.ca.

Dec 5 Dutch Christmas Carol Service at Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. N,. **Woodstock**, Ont. 7:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster. Babysitting provided. Refreshments served.

Dec 11 Christmas sing-a-long concert with the Liberation Choir 7 pm. at Redeemer University in **Ancaster**. See ad.

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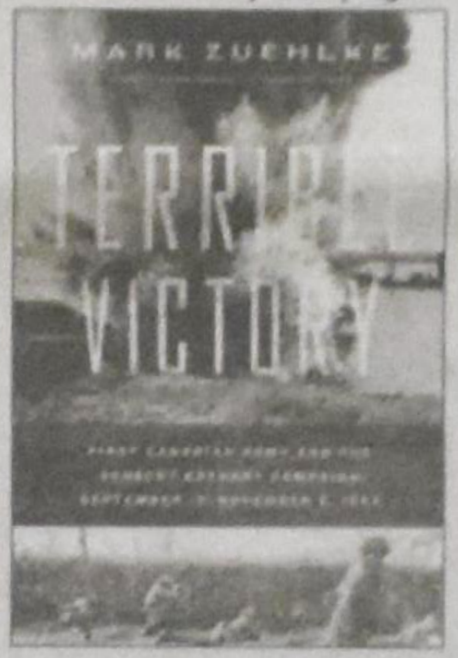

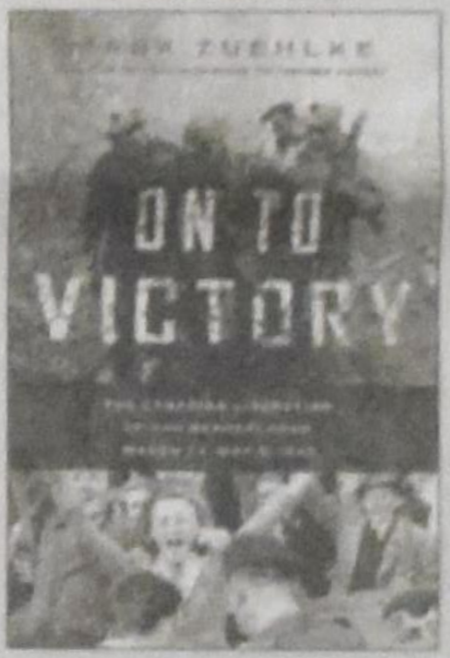

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News

Suicides decimate impoverished First Nations community, film reveals

Lili

Aboriginal kids in K.I. familiar with tragedy.

Bethany Van Lingen

TORONTO, Ont. – 12-year-old Lili found her mother dead in the family home in Kitchenumaykoosib Inninuwug (K.I.) in northern Ontario, 600 km north of Thunder Bay. Lili had been sent by her sister, Nadine, 13, to check on their mother. She had hung herself within their home while her eight children were inside. It was a grim repeat of 45 days earlier, when Lili and Nadine's step-father also hung himself. Lili and Nadine had already lost their biological father to suicide in 1994. The eight children became orphans in 2006.

This is the story director Andrée Cazabon tells in the film *Third World Canada*, which premiered at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Ontario on September 30th. Cazabon's film follows the lives of these children after their mother's suicide.

There is not a home big enough for all eight children within the community, according to Sam McKay, manager at Wasaya Petroleum and a former K.I. councillor. Consequently, the children were divided among family members. Six went with their aunt, Tina Sainnawap of Thunder Bay. Two boys were sent to live in a seniors' home with their grandparents. The children remain separated today, two years after filming has ended.

"If there is any way the public can get together to help these kids. . . . It may not solve the greater problems in our community, but that's not what we're asking," McKay, 51, says.

No houses, no hope

Google Maps cannot give you directions to the K.I. First Nations community because there are more little lakes than roads in that part of northern Ontario. *Third World Canada* refers to the words of Angus Toulouse, the Ontario regional chief for the Assembly of First Nations, who said that First Nations people are facing third world conditions in Canada.

Primarily, the community faces a housing shortage. Community members can fly in or transport a limited amount of housing supplies, at great cost. The filmmaker points out that K.I. is as far north as Australia is south from Toronto.

Cazabon with aboriginal boy.

The government does not allow the community members to log on Crown land, so they cannot harvest their own building materials.

The federal government is responsible for housing, but provides a limited annual budget of $361,000 for the construction of houses. With that budget, only three or four houses can be built each year as the community attempts to address a 200 person waiting list.

"People are living in condemned homes because we don't have enough to build homes for them," Sam McKay of Pickle Lake, Ontario says.

While looking into the shortage of housing, Cazabon discovered the tragic story of the double suicide. There are a great number of suicides within the K.I. community. Tina Sainnawap says that 400 people have killed themselves, including her brother-in-law and sister – a staggering number for a community of only 1200.

But for Cazabon, the purpose of the film was not to solve the problems facing aboriginal communities.

"There's this predominant stereotype that somehow our role as Canadians is to be the guardians of First Nations people. We think that First Nations people can't look after their kids, raise their communities, or come up with solutions to their problems," says Cazabon, filmmaker at Cazabon Productions.

"It's about people witnessing the film," she emphasizes. "It's about watching the film and talking about it together. It's really hard to hold onto stereotypes after seeing this film."

Cazabon developed a relationship with the family during her year and a half in K.I.

"I became a part of the landscape," Cazabon, 36, says. "I'm a relational filmmaker."

Nadine, now 17, says that she became friends with the filmmaker, agreeing to interviews about the death of her mother to complete the film. "Somebody actually noticed. Somebody actually cared," Nadine remembers.

"We all did it," Cazabon told the Toronto audience, "because we believed there could be a higher purpose to this film. Together, we would knock out the family story. The difficult thing about having a relationship with [K.I. community members] is that you want to protect them from the camera. But, in the end, I'm here to witness, to be there for them. What is worse? A tragedy like that to happen and be forgotten," she asks, "or for the story to be out and the witnesses to shoulder it?"

Inspiring change

The film had a great impact on Christine Goulais, a Carlton University student.

"I can relate to the hopelessness these people feel, that nothing can help them anymore. I've felt like that. I can relate to the way that their culture was taken away," Christine Goulais, 19, says.

"It's very empowering as a native person," Goulais continues. "It encouraged me to help the people on my reserve. After watching it, I decided to change my degree. I'm switching from law to social work in February."

The premiere ended with the drums and vocals of an aboriginal healing song. Every person in the theatre stood.

"I found healing through God. I went through every kind of abuse you can imagine," Tina Sainnawap says. "I found healing by being God's servant. I love God with all my heart, mind, and soul." The aunt of Lili and Nadine is also a family home visitor for the aboriginal healthy home, healthy children program.

"God has a will for our family and this community," she maintains. "I believe this film will bring change; I want it to bring change. The more people that are healed, the healthier the community."

Bethany Van Lingen (bethany.vanlingen@gmail.com) is a first-year Bachelor of Journalism student at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario. She is also a member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario.

Elim Investment Opportunities

Established by the Elim Housing Society in 1995, Elim Village is located on 20 acres in the heart of Surrey's Fleetwood area. Based and operated on Christian principles, Elim's vision is to provide various levels of quality care for seniors.

Today, over 500 people call Elim home and are able to enjoy the benefits of living within a caring Christian retirement community. As part of Elim's ongoing successful financial strategy, we offer a variety of investment opportunities. Our rates are determined by the Royal Bank of Canada's prime rate.

Based on *Royal Bank of Canada's* Prime Rate -not to exceed 7%

On Oct. 12th, 2010 Elim Investments were accruing interest from *3% to 5%*

Promissory Notes
Prime plus 1% (variable)

Bonds
Available @ Prime (variable)

Fixed Rates available

This is not to be construed as an offer to solicit investments and no investment can be made until the investor has received an Information Statement issued by Elim Housing Society

ELIM *Village*

For more information regarding investment with Elim Village, contact **Terry-Lynn Dryfhout** at **tld@elimvillage.com** or call **604.583.3546 Ext 4031**
Visit our website at **www.ElimVillage.com**

~ A Christian Retirement Community Invested In Your Future ~